# 2022 ACC Top 10 30-Something: Jonathon D. Wright

**Interviews and Profiles**

*The ACC Top 10 30-Somethings awards recognize in-house counsel between the ages of 30 and 39 for their innovation, approach to challenges, well-rounded perspectives, contributions to the in-house community, and pro bono and volunteer work.*

As Hurco Companies, Inc.'s first general counsel, Jonathon D. Wright had to build the in-house legal department from the ground up. After coming to the company from the law firm world, Jonathon

implemented best practices in legal operations management and leveraged technology to mitigate risk and identify opportunities that would help the company grow.

“A lawyer should not only help a client manage and mitigate legal risk but also to capitalize on business opportunities,” he says. “Lawyers are trained risk identifiers and, often times, are incentivized to be risk adverse. My approach to practicing law has always been to try and be practical and understand legal issues in terms of broader business decisions, which has translated nicely into my role as general counsel.”

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Jonathon manages all aspects of Hurco's global legal function, including corporate governance, securities, compliance, commercial transactions, mergers and acquisitions, labor and employment, litigation, risk management, outside counsel management, and all other aspects of legal operations management.

“I always found my corporate and M&A private practice extremely rewarding and was not necessarily looking to make a move in-house. However, the Hurco GC opportunity was just too interesting to pass up,” Jonathon says. “I knew there would be no shortage of unique and complex legal issues working with a public company group with a global footprint.”

Hurco is an industrial technology company specializing in the development of software, advanced manufacturing equipment, and automation. The company has manufacturing operations and sales, application engineering support, and service subsidiaries in all major machine tool markets in the world, including China, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, India, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Singapore, Taiwan, and the United States. Hurco’s international presence and its listing on the Nasdaq Global Select Market combine to make Jonathon’s legal practice truly diverse and, at least according to him, “extremely intellectually interesting.”

As the GC of Hurco, Jonathon's practice includes everything from securities law and exchange listing compliance in the United States, closing multiple business acquisitions in multiple jurisdictions, real estate issues in the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany, labor and employment issues in Italy and Taiwan, global risk management and training programs, distributor relationship management and agreements in nearly every major machine tool market in the world, imports and exports for various international subsidiaries, tax law in various jurisdictions and corporate reorganizations involving subsidiaries in multiple countries to increase reporting efficiency, reduce cost and redundancies, and manage tax positions.

“Legal issues are often just one of the many factors to consider when making a business decision. So, in addition to being practical, I have found it equally important to take a creative perspective to legal matters and transactions. My goal is to proactively provide multiple options to facilitate the ultimate business objective within a client’s appetite for risk, rather than be perceived as an impediment to the transaction or process.”

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Jonathon addressed the challenges in building a legal department by leveraging AI-based M&A databases and platforms to help Hurco identify acquisition opportunities, ultimately closing multiple strategic acquisitions; implemented versioning software and contract lifecycle strategies to develop a more robust contract management system; and adopted best practices in legal operations management to negotiate reduced rates and nontraditional fee arrangements with legal vendors.

As GC for an international company group, Jonathon faced the challenge of responding to various domestic and international jurisdictions' laws and policies when providing counsel related to operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Trying to stay on top of all the changes in each location when it was happening so quickly was certainly a challenge, but for Hurco, prompt, direct communication and continual collaboration among local management, the corporate legal function, HR, and other teams really helped to create a comprehensive, yet locally-responsive, strategy."

Jonathon determined that Hurco's business, which develops software and manufacturing equipment used in critical infrastructure, often qualified for essential business exemptions from mandatory stay-at-home orders issued in many jurisdictions. However, it was a challenge making those determinations and further distinctions among operational functions within business divisions under the backdrop of an ever-changing regulatory environment driven by local emergency ordinances. "As I am sure many legal professionals would say, it certainly was not a boring time," he says.

Jonathon takes the role of mentor seriously, mentoring associates, partners, and business colleagues. He has always prided himself on "not hiding the ball in helping young lawyers get up the learning curve as quickly as possible, so they can start adding value to the client relationship and legal team immediately."

Jonathon recently founded Focused Forward and says that helping the people experiencing homelessness "impacts my job because we are all formed and informed by the different things we do in life. Working with Focused Forward has helped me to operate with more empathy and just try to get a better understanding of where other parties might be coming from, no matter how different we might be in experience or perspective."

He notes that he wanted to help because the situation of people experiencing homelessness in Indianapolis got much worse during the pandemic, which he observed firsthand as a downtown resident. "Talking with people experiencing a homeless situation can be extremely humbling and really help broaden your perspective, which I have found helpful in all aspects of life."

Focused Forward's goal is to help get people experiencing homelessness off the streets permanently, by providing fellowships that give recipients access to housing and housing assistance, job placement, mental health counseling, a personal support network, and relationship support.

## Q&A with Jonathon D. Wright

### What are the advantages of being both the GC and corporate secretary, and

### what do you bring to the role of corporate secretary?

The consolidation of these roles can lead to certain efficiencies. For example, there is certainty in making sure that record-keeping, certain corporate governance practices, and other matters incorporate the company group's overall legal and risk management strategies and policies. Perhaps, even more important, the operational issues I see as GC help inform my understanding about how different subsidiaries within the company group really operate in practice, which can be a huge benefit in helping manage the corporate secretarial function and optimizing the corporate group structure from both more strategic and practical perspectives.

### What is the most important advice you give to anyone you are mentoring?

Show up, work hard, and always do what you say you are going to do. If you do that, the rest of it will take care of itself.

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Denise Ryan

Legal Resources Manager and Contracts Counsel

Association of Corporate Counsel

Denise Ryan is the legal resources manager and contracts counsel at the Association of Corporate Counsel. She graduated from Catholic University with a BA in history, and a JD from Catholic University’s Columbus School of Law.