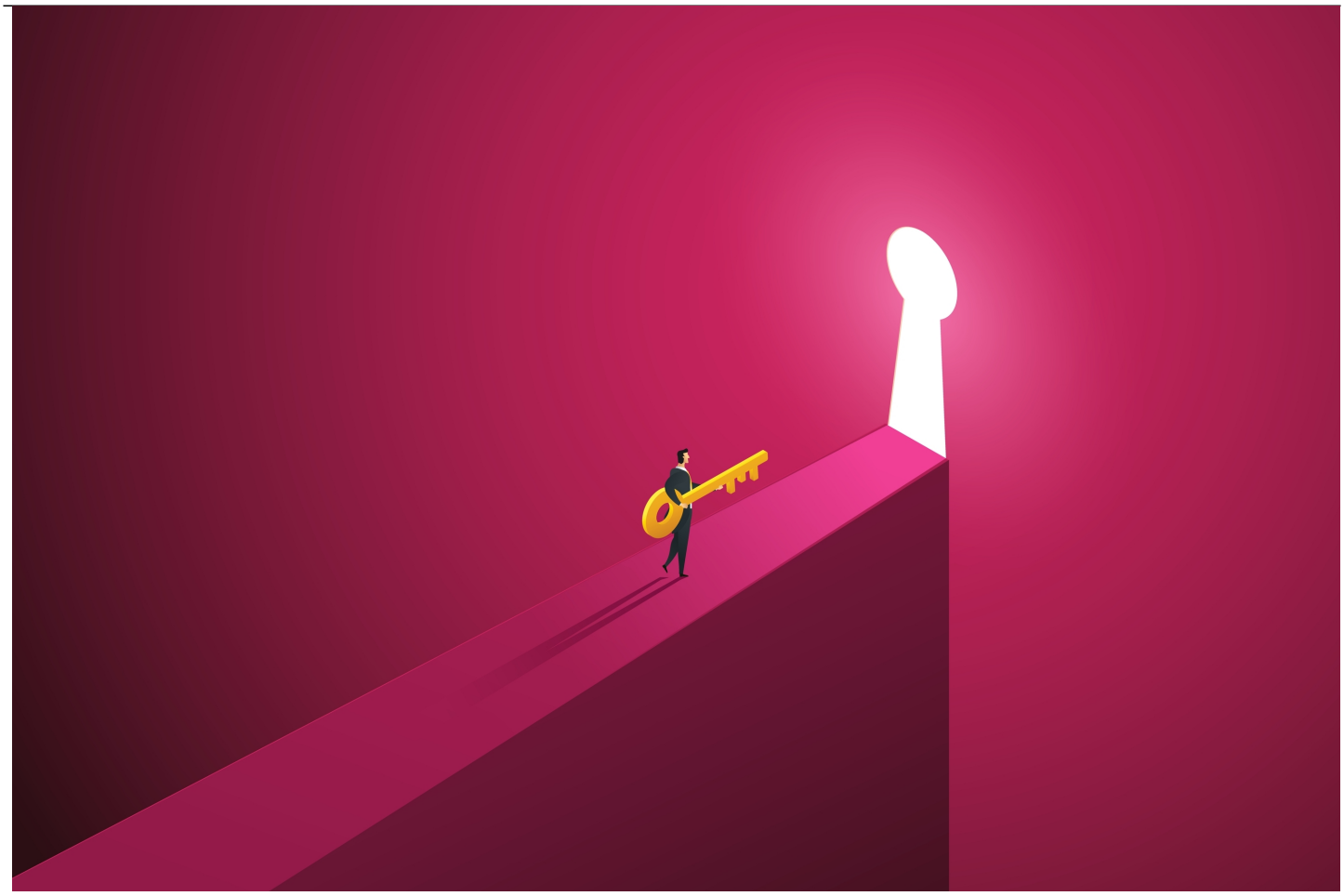
10 Tips to Drive Business Impact, a Golden Key to In-house Success

Career Development



Banner artwork by Lerbank-bbk22 / *Shutterstock.com*

There isn't an instruction manual when taking on an in-house role. You may be called on to negotiate contracts, assess risks, manage outside counsel relationships, or respond to a crisis.

Among the skills needed to succeed, a critical one is the ability to drive business impact through the in-house role. So, how do you unlock your potential and strengthen that business impact?

Most of us learn this job the hard way by trial and error. **The live virtual ACC In-house Legal Impact Certificate Program** was built to close that gap and accelerate in-house skills building.

Don't miss the next session of the program (2-5 November 2026), with more than 20 experienced in-house faculty from Europe, the Middle East, and the United States. Register today!

"Starting out as a new in-house counsel involves a lot of not knowing where to start, and this gave me a great foundation," Krystle Fitzpatrick, Staff Attorney, told ACC after attending the inaugural program in August 2026. "I loved that the faculty was so knowledgeable, and willing to share their experiences. I also appreciated that they were often part of the networking breaks."

Below is a shortlist of 10 practical strategies to put yourself on track to be viewed as a valued business partner, based on insight shared by program faculty at the August program. Learn more, join the next iteration of the program!

1. **Think like a business partner.** "Think broader scale," shared faculty Krishna Varma, Senior Counsel at Travelers. Think more broadly than just through the sole lens of legal risks. Dig

into the impact on the company's finances, reputation, operations, and corporate strategy. "Ultimately, you want to be seen as so business minded, so indispensable, so critical to every discussion that they normally invite to the business meetings," shared Justin Connor, Director, International Chief Legal Officer Engagement at the Association of Corporate Counsel.

2. **Know the business.** "Knowing the business, not just the law", emphasized faculty Amy Yeung, Head of Legal-Ads, PayPal, Inc. She recommends to be curious, get a sense of where the business is headed and what the next milestones are. Learn how HR, Finance, and other business functions operate. Practical tip: Yeung shared she schedules two coffees or virtual sessions every week — one with someone within the organization, which helps to maintain the relationships; and one outside the organization, which helps to understand benchmarks and what's going on outside the organization.

3. **Learn your stakeholders.** The greatest challenge when moving in-house was finding out how best to collaborate, shared faculty Brennan Torregrossa, SVP & General Counsel, US Commercial, GSK. Develop your map of the different stakeholders you need to connect with for which matters — this can take a long time, an ongoing process through years of working with the business. "Build shared literacy with the business" — "you train them, they train you," shared Varma.

4. **Prioritize.** Prioritization is key. At the start of each day, Yeung shares she scans what needs to be prioritized and done on that day.

5. **Adapt your communication.** Tailor your communication to your audience, shared Varma. Consider the type of guidance expected based on their role within the organization, and keep in mind cultural differences when communicating across borders.

6. Collaborate to avoid last-minute surprises. You want to create alignment and get into a cadence of communication with your business stakeholders, shared faculty Christine Vigliotti, Vice President, Associate General Counsel, J&J Snack Foods Corp. This will help you identify risks, catch issues early, and avoid unnecessary surprises that can create disclosure issues, cultural issues, confidentiality issues, etc.

7. **Build trust on a personal level.** This is a critical driver of effectiveness. People associate your personality and your advice, shared Torregrossa. When a crisis hits or when you need to challenge a course of action proposed by the business, that established relationship is a critical driver of your ability to influence next steps. In critical moments, shared Torregrossa, who you are may be what makes the business stakeholder listen — sometimes more than the rationale or merits of the message you are delivering. And on the front end, "if somebody is more willing to trust you, they're more

willing to open up," shared Yeung.

8. Tailor AI governance training to your business stakeholders. The risk for an HR team in using AI is different from the risk for IT, for engineering teams writing software, etc., shared faculty Christina Austin, Senior Counsel at BAE Systems. Training should therefore be tailored to what those stakeholders do.

9. **Develop AI use cases that drive consistency and efficiency for the business.** Focus on "single purpose use-built tools to provide specific and discrete functionality for repeatable processes that exist especially at the interaction point of the business and legal," shared faculty Hayden Creque, Director, Assistant General Counsel, Palo Alto Networks. Check out AI use cases in the ACC AI Center of Excellence for In-house Counsel.

10. **"It's not about the technology, it's about the people,"** shared faculty Spiwe Jefferson, Division General Counsel at ABB, Focus your AI governance on people. Ensure your core AI governance group includes people from multiple departments, such as sales, marketing, IT, operations, HR, etc.

Want to hear more? Register for the **November 2026 cohort** (2-5 November, live virtual) — built specifically for lawyers **one to four years into their in-house career.**

What you'll walk away with

- Tools to strengthen your business judgment to become an indispensable partner — not just a legal adviser
- Exchanges with a global peer network of in-house lawyers facing similar challenges
- Strategies you can use to communicate better and drive real impact
- Shareable ACC digital badge and certificate that demonstrates your commitment to in-house effectiveness to employers and peers

10 modules. 4 half-days. Real skills.

Taught live by general counsel and legal leaders from SAP, Cargill, GSK, Santander, ASML, and more — people who've sat where you're sitting now.

1. **The Role of In-house Counsel, Adding Value, and Demonstrating Impact.** How to adopt a holistic view of the role, and how to measure and show the impact you're already making.

2. **Effective Business Partnering and Communication for In-house Impact.** How to team up with HR, Finance, and other departments.
3. **Managing Confidentiality and Legal Privilege in a Global Business Landscape.** Privilege rules change by jurisdiction. Learn how to navigate the patchwork.
4. **Balancing Risk — Conducting a Legal Risk Assessment.** How to map, prioritize, and communicate risk to the people who need to hear about it.
5. **Balancing Risk — Creating Effective Compliance Programs.** From building the program to driving adoption across a global workforce.
6. **Effective Contract Negotiation Strategies in International Contexts.** Using cultural and emotional intelligence to close better deals across borders.
7. **Managing Outside Counsel and Legal Service Providers.** How to structure engagements, manage performance, and get more value from every dollar spent.
8. **Managing Effective Internal Investigations.** The full lifecycle, from triggering event to resolution and reporting.
9. **Leveraging AI for In-house Counsel and Guiding AI Governance.** How to use AI in your own work, and how to help the business govern it responsibly.
10. **Crisis Management.** Pre-incident planning, live response, and protecting the brand when things go wrong.

Why you should go

How you operate in your first few years in-house can have a lasting impact on the rest of your career. Lawyers who build strong business instincts early become trusted advisors. Lawyers who stay purely reactive often get boxed into a support function, even when they're capable of much more.

This program compresses years of trial-and-error into four half-days — taught by people who have been through these challenges and strategies, so you can be better equipped to make an impact for the business. Every learning day includes a live networking session, because so much of in-house learning happens through peer discussions.

Registration for November closes on October 28. Don’t wait to secure your spot! **Register now for the ACC In-house Legal Impact Certificate Program**.

Join ACC!

Association of Corporate Counsel

Staff

ACC