Building a Community from the Ground Up: Lessons from Launching ACC Mexico

Community

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Launching a new ACC chapter is equal parts challenge and privilege. Since we founded the Mexico Chapter, we have learned that a chapter's value isn't in its name or its founding charter. It comes from the relationships it builds and the conversations it makes possible.

These are some of the lessons, formats and collaborations that have shaped our first stage, shared in the hope that they are useful to other chapters starting out or looking to re-energize their membership.

1. Start with the members you already have

- Before launching, many in-house counsel in Mexico were already ACC members, but without a local chapter they had few reasons or opportunities to engage.
- Our first task was to identify them and reach out personally, one by one.
- **The 1:1 approach has been key.** A personal conversation shows members what the chapter can offer them, and it tells us what they actually need. A mass email can't do either.
- **Lesson learned:** Growth begins with activating existing members, not only recruiting new ones.

2. Create a safe space for candid conversation

- In-house counsel need a space where they can discuss issues openly and safely: sharing concerns, recommendations and best practices with peers who understand their reality.
- That space should be open to **every level of our legal teams**, not just general counsel.
- To make this happen, we created **monthly virtual roundtables**:
    - Each session is moderated by one of our members.
    - A topic of shared interest is presented and discussed openly.
    - Discussions often reveal the need for a deeper follow-up session or a larger event in partnership with a law firm.
- Some topics have been especially popular. **Contract management and administration within legal departments** drew particularly strong interest.
- **Lesson learned:** Learning from fellow in-house counsel is one of the most valuable things a chapter can offer. The roundtables build connection and, above all, a clearer understanding of the value of ACC.

3. Collaborate across borders, including beyond the law

- We have partnered with other ACC chapters, including **ACC Southern California**, in two very different formats:
    - **A purely social event:** a virtual cooking class with a chef, including a raffle for a dinner. It gave us an informal, relaxed way to invite in-house counsel who are not yet members to experience what belonging to ACC feels like.
    - **A substantive legal program:** a joint event where members from both chapters shared insights on legal topics of common interest.
- **Lesson learned:** Not every event needs to be about the law. Social formats lower the barrier to entry and are a very effective membership tool. Cross-chapter collaboration also shows members that ACC is a truly global network.

4. Partner with law firms on high-impact topics

- We have organized events with law firms and their invited experts on **compliance and cross-border transactions under the USMCA (T-MEC)**.
- These sessions have been very successful because they address issues our members are

working on every day.
- **Lesson learned:** Partnerships with firms work best when the agenda is driven by real in-house needs. Often those needs first surface in our roundtables.

5. Governance and discipline behind the scenes

- Our Board meets **monthly** to review:
    - Membership growth plans
    - The event pipeline
    - How we are generating value for members
- **Lesson learned:** A new chapter depends on consistency. A regular rhythm keeps momentum going when the initial launch energy fades.

6. Word of mouth is our strongest asset

- Every event we attend, whether ACC-related or not, is an opportunity to talk about the value of ACC.
- Our members are our best ambassadors. When they share their experience with peers, it carries more weight than any formal campaign.
- **Lesson learned:** Every Board member and active member needs to be conscious of this role.

What it has taken

Launching the Mexico Chapter has been deeply rewarding and genuinely challenging. It has required:

- **Discipline**, to keep a consistent calendar and follow through.
- **Creativity**, to design formats that keep members engaged and attract new ones.
- **Awareness**, of the importance of carrying ACC's value into every room we enter.

Looking ahead

Our vision is to build an even stronger community of ACC in-house counsel in Mexico. Next, we want to forge alliances with **universities and other professional associations** so that sharing experience and knowledge reaches more people and benefits everyone involved.

To other chapter leaders: start with personal connections, listen to what your members need, and don't be afraid to try unconventional formats. That is where community is built.

Join ACC for more chapter insights!

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