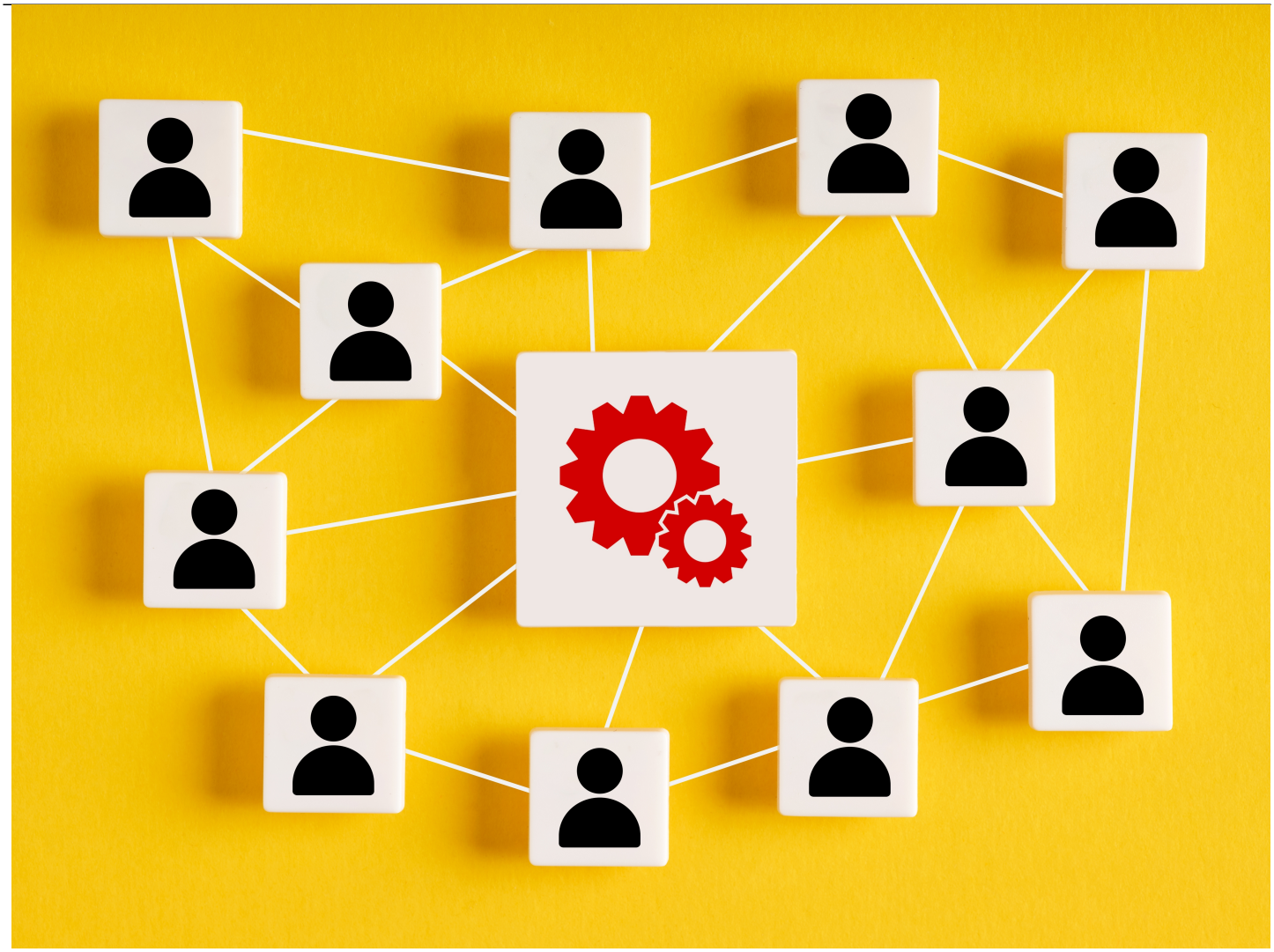


ACC Business Operations and Legal Technology (BOLT) Credential Program: Why We Built It, and Why Now

Law Department Management

Technology, Privacy, and eCommerce



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We are entering a period of continued uncertainty. Geopolitical shifts, economic pressure, and rapid technological change are reshaping corporate strategy, and legal departments feel it first. With the recent closure of a major law firm, many legal professionals are taking a hard look at their own organizations and asking uncomfortable questions. Are we structured appropriately? Do we have the right skills? Are we developing talent for the future?

These questions are keeping many of us up at night. I don't have all the answers, but I do know this: Today's legal department, and the department of the future, isn't just lawyers and support staff. It's a multidisciplinary team of legal, operational, technical, and business experts helping their organizations navigate change.

Legal operations professionals are at the center of that team. That's why I'm excited ACC is launching the Business Operations and Legal Technology (BOLT) Credential Program, built specifically for them. Here's why we built it, and why now.

Why we saw the need



Legal operations didn't arrive in most departments through the front door. A paralegal who was good with spreadsheets started tracking outside counsel spend. A project manager was borrowed from IT to roll out an eBilling system. And over time, those temporary project roles became essential, and in many departments, they became leadership roles.

What hasn't caught up is a common foundation for the people doing this work. Lawyers have law school, the bar, and decades of established continuing legal education and professional development. Legal operations professionals come from varied professional backgrounds and largely learn on the job. They are still expected to be fluent in finance, technology, vendor management, and strategy — all at once.

BOLT closes that gap. It's built for early- to mid-career legal operations professionals and for people moving into the field from paralegal work, procurement, project management, or finance.

Why now

Uncertainty is the backdrop. Three pressures sit in front of it, and each runs straight through legal operations:

- **AI has moved from experiment to expectation.** ACC's latest AI study found AI use in legal departments jumped from 53 percent in 2025 to 85 percent in 2026. Buying a tool is the easy part. Selecting, implementing, governing, and proving its value is operations work.
- **The business wants a return.** This summer I wrote about how law will be priced, noting that CEOs and CFOs who invest in AI expect efficiencies, including lower outside counsel costs. Those conversations need data, and legal ops brings it to the table.
- **Workloads are outpacing headcount.** ACC's 2026 Law Department Management Benchmarking Report found the median in-house lawyer now supports 367 employees, up from 290 a year earlier. Meanwhile, 63 percent of CLOs in our 2026 Chief Legal Officers Survey expect headcount to stay flat with plans to upskill instead. When you can't add people, you add capability.

Change is moving too fast for professionals to learn everything on the job, one crisis at a time. That approach just isn't good enough anymore.

Built by in-house counsel, for in-house counsel

ACC sits at the center of the in-house ecosystem: general counsel, in-house lawyers, paralegals, and legal operations professionals across industries and around the globe. From there, we saw the same gap opening in department after department. Legal ops professionals needed a shared foundation, and they needed it now.

ACC is "by in-house counsel, for in-house counsel," and we built BOLT the same way, alongside leaders from our legal operations community. These practitioners have stood up operational functions from scratch, led technology transformations, and made the business case for their departments in front of CFOs. Some lessons took them years to learn the hard way, and they want the next generation to learn them faster. The best guidance comes from someone who has already faced the same challenge.

What BOLT teaches

BOLT is a self-paced online program. It helps participants move beyond a support role to serve as Steward, Governor, Strategist, Leader, and Translator for the legal department. It has four modules:

- Business Acumen, Strategic Planning, and Leadership
- Business Operations and Financial Management
- Legal Technology Management and Optimization, from eBilling, CLM, and eDiscovery to emerging AI
- External Resources Management

Participants earn a certificate for each module and an ACC BOLT digital badge after completing all four. Modules can be taken in any order, and there are no eligibility requirements. Because the field keeps moving, those who complete the credential keep access to the materials and to future content updates. The learning doesn't stop when the badge arrives.

For general counsel, sponsoring a colleague through BOLT is one of the most direct ways to build the capability your department will need.

The law department of the future is a team sport

The legal department today is about far more than practicing law. It's governance, compliance, security, risk, and business strategy. That changes who belongs on the team: operations leaders, technologists, data analysts, and finance professionals who now work side-by-side with counsel.

It changes the GC's job, too. Eighty-four percent of CLOs now report directly to the CEO. As a former GC, I know you can't steer the business through uncertainty while also running the tech stack, vendor contracts, and budget forecasts. Legal operations empowers legal leaders to lead, and it gives them data and analysis the rest of the C-suite understands. This is how the legal team earns trust at the highest levels of leadership and keeps its seat at the table.

Learning online, growing in the room

BOLT builds a foundation professionals can complete on their own schedule. But some of the most valuable lessons in our profession aren't learned through a screen. They come from hallway conversations and from the moment someone asks, "Can I get your advice on something?"

That's where the ACC Legal Operations Conference comes in, April 18–20, 2027, in Chicago. I see BOLT and Legal Ops Con as two halves of one commitment. The credential builds the knowledge. The conference builds the network and tests that knowledge against what other departments are facing right now.

In uncertain times, that network matters even more. Many legal ops professionals are the only operations person in their department, building without a playbook. Being in a room full of people facing the same questions is its own kind of education.

Investing in the whole team

Standing still isn't an option, for organizations or for the people who power them.

So, back to those three questions. Are we structured appropriately? Only if legal, operational, technical, and business expertise sit at the same table.

Do we have the right skills? Only if we keep building them.

Are we developing talent for the future? Only if we invest in every member of the team, not just the lawyers.

Again, my asks are simple ones. If you lead a legal department, sponsor an operations colleague through BOLT. If you work in legal ops, or want to, start with one module. And, if you can, join us in Chicago this spring at Legal Ops Con and bring a colleague with you.

The law department of the future is already taking shape. Let's make sure the people building it have the skills, the credentials, and the community to do it well.

Learn more about the ACC BOLT Credential Program and register for the ACC Legal Operations Conference.

Join ACC for more legal operations guidance!

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Jason L. Brown is the president and CEO of the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC), leading the world’s largest global organization for in-house counsel and advancing its mission to support, connect, and advocate for the profession worldwide.

Before joining ACC, Jason served as vice president, general counsel, and secretary for GE Appliances, where he led global legal strategy, compliance, governance, and government affairs. He

previously held senior legal leadership roles at Dyson, Inc. and MillerCoors and began his career in private practice in Minneapolis before moving into corporate law.

Jason has also served as executive director of NAMWOLF and held legal leadership positions at Pepsi Beverages Company. He currently serves on the board of directors for Legal Prep Charter Academy and the Howard University School of Law Board of Visitors.

A proud graduate of Howard University, Jason earned both his undergraduate and law degrees there and serves as president of the Howard University School of Law International Alumni Association.