

2023 ACC Top 10 30-Somethings: Nada Alnajafi

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.



Franklin Templeton’s Senior Corporate Counsel Nada Alnajafi's career has been shaped by her multicultural upbringing which instilled in her strong values such as hard work, education, and

community.

Nada's career path was not without challenges. Because she graduated law school at the height of The Great Recession, she experienced an unwelcoming job market. She worked without pay during her first year as an attorney to gain as much experience as possible. Her first paid job was at a civil litigation firm. After a few years of experience under belt, she delved back into the in-house world, but it was not without difficulty. Nada felt alone in her struggles and that is when she found the Association of Corporate Counsel. She joined and immediately felt relieved to meet attorneys, mentors, and thought leaders that represented the type of lawyer she wanted to be. It is because of the way this community helped her that she became passionate about giving back to it.

In addition to her role at Franklin Templeton, Nada leverages her writing and creative skills to regularly post about contract negotiation and redlining tips on LinkedIn. She knew there was a practical education gap she could help fill, noting that 78 percent of contract professionals learn how to redline on-the-job instead of in a classroom. The online tips grew into Contract Nerds, a leading resource and community for lawyers and contracts professionals, which she founded in 2020. Contract Nerds provides thousands of in-house attorneys from varying backgrounds, industries, and locations with access to practical and expert-written content about contracts.

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In 2022, Nada published Contract Redlining Etiquette, a book that provides the first and only uniform set of rules on how to redline contracts. Her 10 best practices promote efficiency, collaboration, and transparency within the contract negotiation and redlining process, ultimately resulting in better contracts. Known by the in-house community as the "contract redlining expert," Nada is a thought leader who is dedicated to improving the way in-house attorneys learn and, in turn, how they work.

Over the past four years, she has helped modernize Franklin Templeton’s overall contract management process, resulting in her team working more efficiently. By partnering with the procurement department and other key stakeholders, she helped drive several low-cost and efficiency-focused initiatives, such as improving utilization of existing technologies, streamlining internal processes, and updating contract templates. These efforts led to improved access to important contracting KPIs, faster review times, and more cohesion between the teams.

In addition, Nada notes a disconnect between traditional law school education and the realities of an in-house legal role. This disconnect can make it more difficult for law school grads to land or thrive in in-house roles without further support. “To be successful you need to master corporate skills like negotiation, communication, and time management, which law school education does not always provide,” Nada explains. She recommends anyone who wants to work in-house to begin working on these skills to give yourself a competitive advantage.

To help fill these knowledge and community gaps that she experienced, she has mentored several students through the community she founded, Contract Nerds, and has volunteered her time with the board of the ACC SoCal Chapter.

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Nada, while acknowledging the role of AI on contract review, firmly believes there is an irreplaceable nature of human touch in every negotiation. She encourages aspiring lawyers to master this art, fostering a deep understanding of its nuances. “I think negotiation will always require humans, but AI can assist with contract template preparation and generating new ideas during negotiation prep,” Nada says. Drawing from her background in psychology, she emphasizes the critical importance of relationships and human interaction within legal practice, deeming them essential for successful negotiation. “I love being in a conference room. I like that human-to-human connection in negotiation,” she shares.

Nada Alnajafi's acceptance speech for ACC's 2023 Top 10 30-Somethings.

Nada's career is a testament to the power of community, adaptability, and diverse experiences. Her multicultural background, coupled with a strong work ethic, has not only shaped her own career but also inspired her to empower others in their legal journeys. Through her expert mentorship, dedication to knowledge-sharing, and a continued commitment to her creative passions, Nada is making a lasting impact in the legal profession.

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