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2023 ACC Top 10 30-Somethings: Susanna Lee

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.

TOP 10
30-
somethings
2023



Susanna Lee
Corporate Counsel, Alliances
Salesforce, Inc.
USA

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Growing up in Atlanta, [Susanna Lee's](#) community contained multitudes. The daughter of immigrants, she saw first-hand the legal issues that befuddled her friends and neighbors as they sought

citizenship. As a person of color in the South, there was always an element of racial tension. It became harder to look askance when she remembered seeing Confederate flag bumper stickers on trucks in her neighborhood as a child: a tension that escalated in [Atlanta's 2021 anti-Asian violence](#). If only our community had a legal advocate, she thought. She decided to become that advocate.

Law was a practical choice for Susanna. Her love of problem-solving, combined with her English undergrad degree and an analytical mind, alongside the opportunity to support her community, led her to pursue a legal education. During her second year of law school, she started considering a career as an in-house corporate lawyer. "There is no one-size-fits-all in-house lawyer, and that appealed to me," she reflects.



Susanna Lee receives her 2023 ACC Top 10-30 Somethings award.

Susanna went directly in-house, still considered an unusual career move. She enjoyed learning how businesses operate. "Having exposure to different parts of the company, whether filing articles to establish an LLC, or working on a joint venture, or understanding how a company generates its revenue allows in-house counsel to build a broad skillset," she says.

Susanna joined [Salesforce](#) in January 2022 where she went to work on commercial transactions. She supports resellers or independent software vendors that use Salesforce's proprietary technology to build custom solutions for third-party customers. "It's similar to the Apple App Store where partners can come build their own solution on top of the Salesforce platform. They can go to market and sell it to customers," she explains.

"There is no one-size-fits-all in-house lawyer, and that appealed to me."

susanna lee

She does a lot of program support for the [Salesforce AppExchange Program](#). She relishes working with non-lawyers and further understanding the holistic nature of the business.

While Susanna enjoys the mix of program support and commercial contracts at her day job, she feels her calling is to give back to her community.

When she was senior counsel at TransUnion, she pitched an externship with her alma mater as a way to create opportunities for students from other countries, despite there being a company policy not allowing credit-only externships. “It was the first time I questioned the system that was in place and asked if we could do something to make it better,” Susanna recalls. “Not only did we find a way to get international students legal placement they may not have been able to obtain because of their visa status, but it also was a personal accomplishment for me to pitch the idea because I come from a culture that doesn’t encourage questioning superiors.”

“Remember that you know more than you think you know. It comes with the nature of the role, which is more wide than deep.”

Susanna lee

Aware of the challenges unique to her demographic — she points out Asian women aren’t well represented in executive ranks — she has joined numerous affinity bar associations to be a mentor. Susanna is currently treasurer of the [Korean American Bar Association of Chicago](#). She uses the platform to reach out to other Korean American attorneys who may take a nontraditional path. “I remember I didn’t have any formal mentorship during those early years in-house and I could have benefited from it,” she reflects.

As a mentor, Susanna stresses the characteristics that define a good in-house lawyer: “You need to be resilient because there will be challenges that you won’t be prepared for, but you will be called on to solve regardless. Remember that you know more than you think you know. It comes with the nature of the role, which is more wide than deep.”

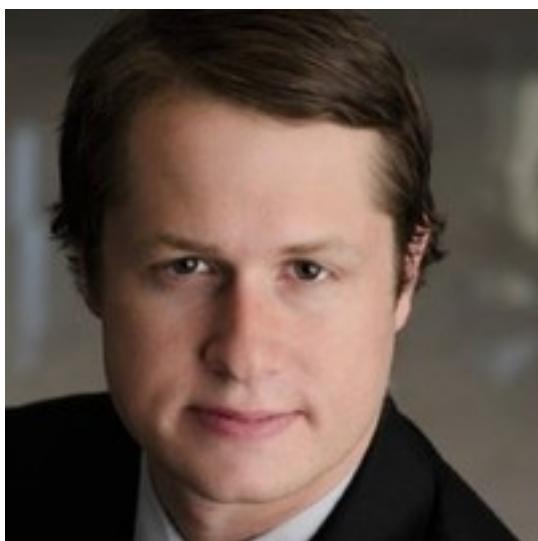
Susanna Lee's acceptance speech for ACC's 2023 Top 10 30-Somethings.

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Joshua H. Shields



Editor

Association of Corporate Counsel