

2023 ACC Top 10 30-Somethings: Dannica Alston

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.



Today's in-house counsel find themselves wearing multiple hats, serving as strategic partners, project managers, and bridges between departments within an organization. Dannica Alston, senior

legal counsel of PepsiCo's APAC sector, highlights the unique aspects of her role and discusses the challenges and opportunities in-house counsel will face in an increasingly data-driven and technologically advanced world.

Dannica led the development and implementation of PepsiCo's fully digital contract management system. Her efforts resulted in the business saving an average of one to two hours per contract for 30 percent of associates and more than two hours for 40 percent of associates, translating into annual savings of 2,400 hours. Moreover, the improved process enabled deals to be approved days to a week faster, reducing the contract lifecycle time by three to seven days and earning a satisfaction rating of 8.5 out of 10.



Dannica Alston receives her 2023 ACC Top 10 30-Somethings award.

Dannica's journey in-house started after she found her niche in the transactional part on her firm's intellectual property team. However, the desire for a more immersive and varied experience led her to explore in-house opportunities. "I think some people just gravitate towards being a generalist. For me, I love the challenge of constantly learning and advising on different areas of law and I find that much more interesting than being pigeonholed into one niche area," she explains.

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She was attracted to the opportunity to be deeply involved in the business and work on projects from start to finish. Unlike the fragmented nature of tasks in private practice, in-house counsel can become

integral to their organizations. “Being in-house, you really get the opportunity to become a strategic business partner, solve complex problems and help drive results,” Dannica affirms. She took a leading role in the creation of a consumer loyalty app – PepsiCo’s first ever in-house built consumer app, and the first fast-moving consumer goods loyalty app in Australia. She embedded privacy compliance by design in the project, anticipating and accounting for future legislative changes to avoid costly and complex amendments post-launch.

One of the most exciting parts of her job, she shares, is working with a wide range of people with different roles and backgrounds. From collaborating with agronomy teams and potato farmers, to engaging with sales teams and nutrition scientists, Dannica has learned from diverse professionals. “As an in-house counsel, you have to be practical, pick your battles, and communicate effectively with stakeholders from different backgrounds,” she counsels.

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A major part of her role at PepsiCo includes a commitment to social responsibility. For the past four years, Dannica has led PepsiCo’s Larry Thompson Fellowship program in Australia – a paid internship program for law students from diverse backgrounds. In 2022, one of the internship positions was filled by an Indigenous student who was later hired as a paralegal. “It’s definitely a two-way street,” she says of the two-month internship. “We’re giving our interns the opportunity to come and learn what it’s like to work as an in-house lawyer, but they bring fresh perspectives as well.”

Moreover, Dannica was selected for a six-week full-time secondment to an Indigenous organization through a partnership with Jawun, an Australian nonprofit focused on corporate secondments to such groups. She also serves on the committee of a community-based nonprofit organization and was awarded runner-up in an internal "Charity Hero" competition, securing a AU$1,000 grant for the organization.

Dannica’s accomplishments and journey in the in-house role is a testament to the dynamic nature of the legal profession and its capacity to contribute significantly to the strategic growth and success of businesses.

Dannica Alston's acceptance speech for ACC's 2023 Top 10 30-Somethings.

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