

2024 ACC Top 10 30-Somethings: Alexander B. White

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.



Alexander B. White is like the point guard for regulatory matters for Bank of America's wealth management businesses. When the bank receives an inquiry from the Financial Industry Regulatory

Authority (FINRA), the regulatory body that writes and enforces rules for registered broker-dealers, or the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), he keeps the ball — that is, the request — moving.

Keeping the ball moving means no one is waiting on someone else and everyone has a job to do. It's a lesson he discovered works just as well in the legal department as it does for his young son's basketball team. Day-to-day regulatory requests have a typical turnaround time of two weeks.

Alex's responsibilities are not limited to the national financial regulators. For the Bank's wealth businesses, he is also in charge of responding to subpoenas from the US Department of Justice, state attorneys general, and state securities divisions. These too can involve investigations that range from preliminary reviews to significant regulatory matters.

To improve his team's regulatory response process, Alex led a project to identify the sources of information typically requested and from what departments. The cross-functional project streamlined workflows and enhanced the way stakeholders manage responses. Recognizing that none of this work can be accomplished alone, Alex credits his team — many of whom have decades of experience — for the high quality of legal representation they deliver across a diverse array of matters.

Managing risk proactively

Alex's nightmare scenario is the bank taking a major reputational and financial hit from a public enforcement action. "We try to look around the corner as a department and ask: "What are the things that could contribute to our risks? Where do we need to enhance?'"

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Problems will always be present as circumstances change, as all compliance professionals understand. When the bank learns of an issue, Alex immediately starts to think about remediation and what can be done to fix the problem. This proactive approach has served to protect the bank's reputation before risks escalate.

A product of, and contributor to, the mentoring loop

According to Alex, if his mentor happened to be an accountant, he might be getting an award for being an outstanding bookkeeper. When he was an undergraduate, he was part of a scholarship program. In the summer, participants interned at various departments, from Marketing to Legal, at Heinz, the American food manufacturer, famous for its ketchup. He happened to end up in the Legal Department, which at the time was run by General Counsel Laura Stein.

"Laura is one of the most dynamic attorneys in the world," Alex shares. "She supported me tremendously, introducing me to people and practice areas. I applied to law school without a second thought."

Now an adjunct professor at his alma mater, Georgetown University Law Center, he shares his passion for the legal profession, and particularly in-house practice, with the next generation of

lawyers.

A calm but stern voice

There’s another lesson Alex learned from coaching youth basketball: Yelling from the rafters doesn’t accomplish much. When every regulatory request could potentially balloon to a nightmare scenario, there’s a reflexive urge to insist on immediate action. Setting expectations in a direct — but also a calm and kind — way, and holding people to them, whether in the legal department or on the basketball court, is an effective way to communicate the seriousness of the matter without crying wolf.

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