

6 Tips to Help Manage the Pressures of the In-house Lawyer Role

Career Development



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The demands of the in-house counsel role can be stressful. Organizations call on in-house counsel to take on complex tasks as a legal advisor, mediator of disputes and business leader.

Meanwhile, recent surveys show in-house attorneys are reporting rising workload, which can negatively impact well-being.

Here are 6 well-being tips to help avoid burnout and set you on a path for a long, enjoyable, and successful career.

1. Recognize the challenges in-house attorneys face

Being a lawyer is a lonely role, especially as general counsel. Your role is to advise and protect the company.

From time to time, you will have to take an objective position between the executives and the board. In addition, your advice may be unpalatable to your colleagues and employer.

Be prepared to explain the pros and cons of the options, justify your risk balancing, and show that

you are taking into account the business objectives of your stakeholders.

Check out ACC's updated Wellness resource center!

2. Build relationships with co-workers

It can be difficult to open up to your colleagues about the challenges you face.

Reach out to co-workers and get to know them better on a personal level. Doing so may make them more receptive to the positions you take. It also can make it easier to discuss your role and to seek their support.

3. Create a support network

Seek out cheerleaders in your company or your wider circle who know you well and are great listeners. Lean on them, as they will on you in their times of need.

Don't wait for a crisis to develop to start building this support network. Routinely meet with family, friends, or co-workers as allies.

4. Take time to reflect on what works (and what doesn't)

Think about what habits or actions might be at play when you are at your best. Be curious about the factors that have a positive and negative impact on your mental health well-being.

When you are in that strong and self-assured place, what are the actions or steps that you have taken (or avoided) that might have contributed to this state of mind?

Don't lose the wonderful inner monologue from this thought process! Journal your thoughts and record them somehow.

5. Develop healthy habits

Part of the self-reflection process can also include looking for new habits that can support your well-being.

When you reflect on others in your life who seem to have good mental health, what do you notice them doing (or not doing)?

Schedule time for self-care. Find time in your week to read, exercise, and/or relax with a hobby.

6. Be honest with yourself

What are some warning signs you have previously experienced that you might be starting to feel overwhelmed, anxious, or disengaged? How might you head that off? Failing to recognize these red flags can lead to attorney burnout.

And remember, lawyers are not super-heroes. Sometimes, the hardest part is admitting to yourself, and then to others who care about you, that you are not coping - at a certain time, in some circumstances.

Need more suggestions for maintaining a healthy mindset. Check out ACC's new **Well-being Toolkit for In-house Lawyers***. The toolkit includes checklists based on insights from experienced in-house professionals.*

Join ACC for members-only toolkits and more.

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