



The Rise of the Legal+ Role

Law Department Management

Career Development



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Cheat Sheet

- **Seeking alignment.** Many non-core legal functions are directly or indirectly aligned to the legal team. It's critical that in-house counsel know how to engage with (or oversee) these functions effectively.
- **Expanding responsibilities.** Legal chiefs who wish to take on more for their companies should look for ways to prove their effective leadership, results, dependability, and, above all, broad business acumen.
- **So long, farewell.** The role of "traditional lawyer GC" is widely disappearing, creating new growth opportunities for those with the right mindset.
- **You know best.** The only person who can decide whether to embrace an expanded role is you. Consider whether an expanded role is right for you, your career, and your personal development.

In-house lawyers pursue chief legal roles — whether titled general counsel (GC), chief legal officer (CLO), or otherwise (such titles used interchangeably throughout this article) — for a variety of reasons. Two common reasons are that they enjoy (or believe they will enjoy) operating as a generalist and that they want to maximize their impact. For these same reasons, and perhaps also because lawyers tend to be gluttons for punishment, sitting legal chiefs increasingly find themselves and their teams taking on responsibilities beyond the traditional legal scope.

In January, ACC released its annual report, the [2025 ACC Chief Legal Officers Survey](#), which found that 83 percent of CLOs from all company sizes globally hold responsibilities beyond legal. Respondents' companies had diverse backgrounds: 65 percent were US companies, 21 percent were public companies, and 47 percent had a legal staff of fewer than six individuals.

A 2024 study by Russell Reynolds similarly found that the remit of the Fortune 500 general counsel [has expanded in recent years](#). It found that “in 2022, just 26 of the Fortune 500 GCs had additional responsibilities in ‘non-traditional’ areas; in 2023, this number has risen to 41, and looks set to rise further.”

These trends are not surprising. CEOs often find it efficient to consolidate various administrative functions. Or they may decide that their leadership team is too heavily weighted toward staff roles versus core business operational functions and desire to bring balance to the voices at the table.

In either case, general counsel who exhibit excellent judgment and skills beyond handling legal issues; who demonstrate the ability to identify, develop, and lead people and teams; and — crucially — who achieve significant business results are often prime candidates for an expanded leadership role, even into areas where they may lack technical expertise.

[Elevate your role from legal expert to strategic partner at ACC's CLO Summit in Barcelona this May!](#)

Throughout our careers, both of us have seen our chief legal officer roles expand significantly. Mark Roellig saw his responsibilities grow over the course of his career. At times, in various roles and companies, he oversaw all administrative functions, compliance, government relations, public policy, strategy, facilities, corporate marketing, human resources, and served as corporate secretary. He retired as chief technology officer at MassMutual, having passed the torch in the legal department two years prior.

In Stephen Mar's current role at Odeko, his responsibilities besides legal include corporate secretary, human resources, PR, communications, insurance/risk, corporate development, and a variety of administrative functions.

In this article we aim to do three things:

1. Educate the reader on [opportunities](#) that are, to varying degrees, housed within the legal or administrative function.

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2. Offer [practical advice](#) to legal executives seeking to expand their responsibilities to better themselves, their teams, and their enterprises.
 3. Help you decide whether taking on [non-legal responsibilities](#) is right for you.

For those who desire to be challenged in areas beyond the traditional practice of law, this article is worth reading and may be worth sharing with your CEO or CHRO.

The expanding opportunities for the legal chief

There are many administrative functions that are at times aligned with the legal department. We'll examine a number of those functions below, beginning with those most often housed within the legal function. Keep in mind that the categories listed in this article, and the degree to which the functions align with the legal function, will vary depending upon the industry and company. Additionally, this article does *not* focus on the president/COO role or its equivalent, which is typically more of an operational executive versus an administrative executive role. For more on general counsel as COO, consider [this article](#) by *Corporate Counsel*.

Areas commonly associated with the legal function

Corporate secretary. The function most often aligned with the legal chief is corporate secretary. ACC's CLO Survey found that 55 percent of CLOs hold or oversee the role. The Russell Reynolds study similarly found that over half of Fortune 500 general counsel held corporate secretarial responsibilities. In fact, many general counsel are titled "general counsel and secretary" — a title we have both held.

This alignment makes sense. The corporate secretarial responsibility is, at its core, a legal function to protect the company and the board. It is critical that the board receives the necessary information to exercise its business judgment, follows the right process to reach decisions, and documents those decisions clearly in resolutions and minutes. Board processes, materials, resolutions, and minutes are often scrutinized in depositions, by aspiring plaintiffs' lawyers or by courts and regulators. Thus, they must be legally supportable and prepared thoughtfully by someone who appreciates the legal implications underpinning seemingly innocuous drafting decisions.



A legal background is also necessary to help effectuate board processes. Since a corporation's power emanates from the board, the corporate secretary should help establish how the board operates and how it decides and documents governance matters, such as the delegation of various matters to committees, subcommittees, and management. This is done through governance guidelines, charters, resolutions, and documents that clearly outline and articulate the respective responsibilities of the board, committees, and management.

Creating documents is not enough, however; the corporate secretary must also ensure that the board and its committees are accomplishing their duties as laid out in those documents. This can be done through board meeting agendas, which the secretary often helps to shape.

The value of this CLO/corporate secretary association was identified in the [winning submission](#) of the ACC Carl Liggi Memorial Paper Competition which examining the legal risk implications at companies where the CLO is also the corporate secretary. It provided evidence that the upside impact is significant, especially when combined with an independent board of directors. These companies experience fewer incidents of shareholder litigation, regulatory violations, and regulatory penalties.

[Read more: [How Combining the Roles of Corporate Secretary and Chief Legal Officer Impacts Legal Risk and The Practitioner's Guide to Building Efficient Board & Committee Processes: What Really Needs to Happen Behind the Scenes](#)]

Entity management. Many companies operate through multiple legal subsidiaries, and the operational oversight of the management of such entities is often rolled into the corporate secretary — and thus legal — function. Again, this makes sense. Entities need to be created legally and with the ability to comply with the laws, regulations and legal filings in the jurisdictions where they operate. And where there is a desire to maintain corporate separateness among various operating subsidiaries (e.g., to minimize cross-entity risk or limit veil-piercing), such entities must also have the appropriate separate governance, structures, and documentation in relation to the parent.

Areas often aligned with the legal function



Compliance, government relations, and regulatory affairs. According to ACC's 2025 CLO Survey, 65 percent of GCs oversee compliance, and 21 percent oversee government affairs. The Russell Reynolds study found that 36 percent of Fortune 500 general counsel oversaw their company's compliance function. It also found that the greatest jump in responsibilities from the prior year was in GCs gaining externally-facing responsibilities, including government relations and regulatory affairs.

Legal oversight of these functions makes sense, as they all focus on risk calibration, tend to have overlapping responsibilities, and generally require interacting with government entities, regulatory agencies, and external lawyers. Consolidating these functions under the legal chief may increase efficiency and consistency when interacting with external parties. And for many smaller companies, these functions are often not robust enough to merit standalone departments — and the legal department is a natural landing spot.

Of course, there are reasons why a company may choose to house some or all of these functions outside legal. For example, in a highly regulated industry or for an enterprise that has experienced compliance difficulties, the CEO may want the chief compliance officer to be its own role and function. Or a company may feel that separating the functions creates a helpful diversity of approaches and reduces the risk of “groupthink.” Regardless, these functions are often consolidated under the legal function.

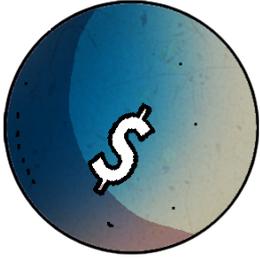
Areas that often work closely with the legal function

As mentioned in the previous section, there are areas that often sit outside the legal department but require close coordination with it. While this can be accomplished through consolidating those areas under the legal chief, it may also simply require close coordination.

Public relations (PR). ACC's CLO Survey found that 11 percent of CLOs hold the public affairs role. Similar to government relations and regulatory affairs (see above), PR is an external-facing function. Unlike those other functions, who interact primarily with government agencies, politicians, and lawyers, PR typically will interact with and seek to influence a broader audience, including media outlets, customers, competitors, and even the general public.

That being said, PR will often need to coordinate closely with the legal function, particularly if the

company is in a highly regulated industry or — for whatever reason — is facing a large volume of crisis communications that requires significant input from a legal or risk perspective.



When Mar was at WeWork, for example, legal and PR were separate functions but worked together closely. As the global head of litigation and investigations, he routinely reviewed, and often helped develop, crisis communications. And after he left WeWork, the company consolidated PR and the rest of the communications function under the CLO. Mar's experience at WeWork led in part to Odeko, his current company, consolidating the communications function (both PR and corporate comms) under him. Likewise, at MassMutual, when dealing with a significant potential media crisis, the external crisis management firm was retained and led by the legal team.

Trust and safety. Trust and safety originated with the rise of online platforms, products, and services, especially at companies who allow for the posting, sharing, and/or hosting of user-generated content. The function has since expanded to a more diverse array of companies that want to ensure responsible and safe policies, principles, and practices to promote user safety, manage user-generated content, and prevent the spread of harmful, illegal, or inappropriate material.

The function also may support the management of data privacy, the use of company data and information by AI, and security issues and offline harms that may impact people interacting in real life (e.g., gig economy and dating platforms).



Sara Lee, GC, VSCO

According to Sara Lee, GC of VSCO, “it makes sense for trust and safety to report into legal (as it

does at VSCO) because there are potential risks involved in this function — particularly with user harms, financial liabilities, and impacts to a company’s brand — and the legal team is well equipped to balance the management of those risks with the company’s business objectives.” Jonathan Schoenfeld, GC of Gopuff, notes that trust and safety also makes sense to align with legal “because it involves drafting policies, creating and sustaining processes, and leading cross-functional efforts — all key disciplines of great lawyers.”

Whether or not this function reports into legal, there should be close collaboration with the policy, product, and engineering functions to navigate through the complex design and technical challenges involved in this area.

Corporate development and strategy (Corp Dev). Often, a significant part of implementing a company’s strategy is identifying opportunities and partnerships to pursue — or *not* to pursue. The corporate development team generally will be tasked with sourcing those opportunities. Once that initial work is done, the legal department will often step in to document and finalize the opportunities.

Of course, the handoff is rarely that clean. Even after an opportunity has been handed off to legal, Corp Dev often remains involved as a source of knowledge and a business point of contact. And in some cases, legal is brought in earlier to help vet a particularly complicated opportunity. Because of this coordination, some companies consolidate, strategy, Corp Dev and legal or place corporate development under legal.

Administrative responsibilities that sometimes find a home in the legal department

There is also a “catch-all” category of administrative functions that often need a home and may be more closely connected to legal or finance than to other administrative functions. These functions most often fall under legal or finance for that reason.

Investor relations (IR). Investor relations usually sits within finance due to the close coordination required with the finance team on issues such as earnings calls, materials for public filings, and analyst presentations. IR also must coordinate with legal, however, due to legal requirements for SEC filings, regulation fair disclosure (Reg FD), proxies, and annual reports — and because legal may need to review communications to individual investors.

At WeWork, IR reported directly to the CEO, but coordinate closely with legal and finance. At Odeko, IR is co-owned by finance and legal, in close coordination with the CEO.



Internal audit. Internal audit often reports into the CFO. At MassMutual, internal audit reported directly to the audit committee, but administratively (for items like space, budget, draft of appraisals) reported into Roellig. Both authors would argue that internal audit may be better aligned with legal since the highest-risk issues that internal audit identifies may be within, or involving, the finance organization — creating a potential conflict of interest if the head of internal audit reports into the CFO.

Enterprise risk. ACC's CLO Survey found that 37 percent of CLOs oversee "risk." Indeed, enterprise risk management generally reports either directly to the CEO or lives under legal or finance. At both MassMutual and WeWork, it fell under the CFO. Regardless of where it sits, there tends to be an enterprise risk committee that includes the CEO, CFO, and CLO and additional business leaders. Since all will be involved, regardless of its reporting, this is a function that can be placed under the CFO or legal chief to reduce another direct report to the CEO.

Procurement. Procurement is a three-legged stool that involves:

1. The business/project owner that wants to purchase the products or services,
2. The finance team that pays for the contracts, and
3. The legal team that develops and revises the contracts.



Rasmani Bhattacharya, Chief Legal Officer, CSG

Procurement generally sits under the CFO or legal chief, and there are good arguments for both – although ACC’s CLO Survey found that only six percent of respondent CLOs hold the procurement role. One reason to put procurement under the legal function is that legal often plays a significant role in developing standardized contract terms, guardrails, and playbooks for the procurement team to use.

For example, Rasmani Bhattacharya, CLO of CSG, notes that “having procurement report to the GC is a natural fit due to the contract intensive nature of the function. A good GC has a strong grasp on the company’s strategic plan and the expected future needs of key customers. This opens up the ability to take a more strategic, forward-looking approach with vendors, and ensure that there is close alignment between what is being promised to customers and the corresponding commitments to key suppliers.”

Insurance. Insurance procurement and claims, including general policies and renewals, usually sits under the CFO. But these responsibilities can also sit under the legal chief, as the legal team is often involved in meetings with brokers, policy reviews, renewals, claims management, and potential claim identification. Moreover, some litigation matters require close coordination with insurance brokers to ensure maximum coverage under a company’s policies (e.g., directors and officers liability and workers’ compensation) and compliance with indemnification requirements. At Odeko, insurance and risk currently sit under Mar.



Privacy and cybersecurity. ACC's CLO Survey found that 39 percent of CLOs hold privacy responsibilities and that 13 percent handle cybersecurity. It is increasingly common for legal teams to have privacy counsel who either own the privacy function entirely or coordinate closely with the function if it is housed elsewhere. In addition, several years ago the National Association of Corporate Directors suggested that a CISO should report to the CLO and not the CIO due to a potential conflict of interest, and because if the CISO has encountered breaches, having the CISO under the CLO makes it more likely that communications regarding the company's response will be privileged.

Cybersecurity often falls under the CISO in the technology team, if the company has a CISO, or directly under the CIO in some cases. Privacy sometimes also sits under the CISO, but it may also be properly housed under the legal chief, given that privacy issues often require legal involvement due to the myriad legal and regulatory requirements.

Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). ACC's CLO Survey found that 19 percent of CLOs hold the ESG / Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) role and that 17 percent stated were "very involved" in leading their organization's DEI efforts. The likelihood of legal involvement with DEI is on the increase as organizations work to carefully navigate the evolving policy issues, degree of focus, and legal requirements. Nonetheless, companies have increasingly put resources toward developing ESG, CSR and DEI initiatives and goals. These efforts are often driven or encouraged by the board.



Stuart found that 96 percent of corporate board directors surveyed “expect a continued or stronger focus on ESG in the next five years” and that 63 percent of them cited DEI as one of the “three most important ESG issues for their organization.”

Assembling an ESG, CSR, or DEI committee requires coordination across many departments, including operations, human resources, communications, and legal/governance. Legal often ends up coordinating those efforts due to the cross-departmental organization required, because the public policy and legal landscape regarding these types of efforts is changing rapidly, and because the committee is often expected to report its progress to the board. When Mar was at WeWork, legal was involved in both efforts and was also frequently consulted for input on decisions that significantly touched these matters.

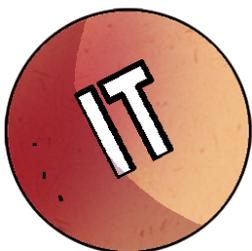
Other administrative functions

Finally, there are administrative functions that can exist as standalone departments or roll up into a non-legal function — but may also be consolidated under the legal function.

Human resources (HR). ACC’s CLO Survey found that 16 percent of CLOs hold the CHRO role. Although this structure is more common at smaller entities, coordination between legal and HR has long been important, regardless of the size of the company, and even when HR is its own separate function. EEO investigations, executive compensation, employee documentation, and benefit and stock plans require careful legal documentation and close coordination. Additionally, legal oversight may minimize significant employment litigation and employee relations issues.

That is why at US WEST the CEO placed HR under Roellig’s team. With the requirements and rules of public and SEC reporting Roellig would argue that, in particular, executive and board compensation is primarily a legal function. The importance of that close coordination has also [become even more pronounced](#) recently as companies dealt with issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic and hybrid or remote workforces. Internal communications are often aligned with HR, but if external communications are aligned with “public policy” issues, it can, for efficiency, be combined under the legal chief. At Odeko, both HR and communications (internal and external) currently sit under Mar.

Facilities management and security. ACC’s CLO Survey found that 12 percent of CLOs are responsible for real estate/corporate facilities and that 8 percent handle physical security. Unless the company has a CAO or COO, neither facilities management nor physical security has a natural fit in the leadership team. But because these administrative-adjacent functions often include agreements, such as leases and service, and support contracts of all types, they sometimes end up under legal’s purview.



It is likely for that reason that Roellig had responsibilities for both at US WEST and MassMutual.

Similarly, at WeWork, Mar coordinated closely with the security team on event security, incident response protocol, and other physical security issues.

Other functions. Finally, assignment to the legal chief of functions like technology or marketing is rare, but it can occur. After he left law, Roellig had technology at MassMutual and corporate marketing when GC at StorageTek. Finance will rarely report into legal, but the reverse is often true, particularly in startups where the CFO is looking to reduce legal costs and hires the first attorney.

Attributes to develop to receive Legal+ opportunities

When Mar joined Odeko in 2022 as its first GC, he made known to his CEO that he would be interested in doing more for the company. Six months later, Mar's CEO referenced that initial discussion as part of the reason he chose to provide him with additional responsibilities.

If you are a legal chief interested in taking on more, it usually helps to make that interest known in a respectful but clear manner. Even if your CEO or CHRO does not think you are ready at that moment, it can spark a discussion about what skills or experiences would enable you to be ready someday — or it may cause you to realize that you may need to look elsewhere for that opportunity.

You will be better positioned to make the case for additional responsibility if you have already taken steps toward building an appropriate skillset. Here are a few non-legal attributes the authors have found useful in making the case for additional responsibilities:

Leadership

For the CEO or board to have confidence in expanding your role, the most important skill for you to display is your ability to lead — and specifically, to add business value beyond legal know-how at the executive leadership team level.

You will be better positioned to make the case for additional responsibility if you have already taken steps toward building an appropriate skillset.

Technical ability and specialized knowledge are highly valued in law but are less important in more senior legal positions, especially as you build a team around you. And some technical proficiencies will be increasingly less important due to advances in AI. The more important marker of good leadership, especially in-house, is emotional intelligence: the so-called “soft skills” of judgment, innovation, creativity, adaptability, empathy, listening, team-building, and related skills.

Leadership exhibits itself through the skillful development of the people and teams around you. If you are the smartest person in the room – you have a weak team. Much like an NFL head coach, you will be evaluated based on your track record of building high-performing teams and developing a “coaching tree” who can either succeed you or take on a top role at another company.



Cathleen Hartge, GC, Runway

Cathleen Hartge, GC of Runway, agrees. “For GCs, the ability to build a high-performing team is not merely a nice-to-have — it’s necessary to be able to succeed in the role,” she says. “As a GC, you should constantly be identifying key at-bats for your team members, which will not only free you up to take on more but will also develop them and set them up for expanded roles down the line.”

Jennifer Salinas took on the CIO role at Cerence Inc., in addition to the GC and corporate secretary roles, and was eventually promoted to CAO. She advises aspiring lawyers “not to be afraid to throw your hat in the ring for any leadership role, even if optically it may not make sense. In the end, a leadership role is a leadership role. If you are a quick study and have demonstrated that you can [lead, develop, and inspire a team](#); develop and execute against a strategy; and, among other things, committed to operational excellence (i.e., cost efficiency at the forefront of your mind), you are an [excellent candidate for almost any role](#).”

Strategic or whole-company thinking

As lawyers, we are trained to identify specific risks and offer suggestions to solve them. In considering your fit for oversight of non-legal roles, however, your CEO or board will likely consider your ability to identify opportunities (rather than merely potential or existing problems), and to think strategically across the entire business (rather than focusing solely on the legal or regulatory issues). To identify these strategies and opportunities, understanding your company’s business is absolutely critical.



Batur Oktay, former GC of Rad Power Bikes

In other words, can you step outside your traditional area of expertise and think laterally? Batur Oktay, former GC of Rad Power Bikes, had responsibilities beyond legal, including facilities and HR. He notes that you “need to learn the business, talk to as many business leaders as you can, learn how to add value so you can be ‘invited into the room’ and considered for other opportunities.”

In addition, all companies say that they are focused on their customers. With this in mind, the legal and compliance functions often have unique perspectives on customer pain points as they turn into issues and complaints. Turn these complaints into an opportunity to provide a better customer experience and [proactively eliminate or mitigate those pain points](#).

Delegation

Ironically, your ability to practice law — and to practice it excellently — can go from being your greatest asset to becoming a hindrance to further advancement. To be able to lead larger organizations and multiple teams, you will likely need to delegate most of your legal work and instead focus your time on effective leadership, working with your peers, and thinking strategically.

One valuable piece of advice Mar received as he grew in his career was to do his best to “delegate his job away.” Particularly in larger organizations, a good GC should delegate as many of their technical tasks as possible so that they can be more strategically focused with the board and the executive team. It provides for the flexibility for the GC to “dive into” legal issues where they have expertise and add value. And as an added benefit, this delegation provides the space for the legal team to develop and take on more responsibilities. Finally, it frees up the GC to have time to become a thought leader in the industry and legal profession.



Jessica Hodkinson, CLO and Corporate Secretary,
Panasonic Corporation of North America

Jessica Hodkinson, CLO and corporate secretary of Panasonic Corporation of North America, agrees, stating that it is “important to ensure you have the legal team and succession planning in place for legal so that the CLO is able to take on such additional responsibilities without jeopardizing the strength of the legal department.”

Thought leadership

If you are viewed as both an organizational leader and a thought leader, it can lead to even better opportunities. In the past, Roellig worked with Brad Smith, former general counsel of Microsoft, on the board of the Leadership Council for Legal Diversity, and was able to witness Smith’s leadership in the DEI space first-hand. Smith is known as a thought leader in the areas of legal, government affairs, AI, DEI, and technology regulation, which has served him well and certainly contributed to his promotion to vice chair and president of Microsoft.

Results matter

In the end and above all, you should expect to be evaluated on whether you have been *successful*. Have you been able to show results compared to your business or legal objectives? Have you brought in projects that are on time, on budget, successful, valuable, and that advance the strategies of the enterprise? If you have been successful in your existing areas of responsibility, it is a good indication that you will be similarly diligent when provided additional responsibilities.

Why you should (or *shouldn't*) pursue non-legal responsibilities

We have now discussed *what* additional responsibilities you can take on as a legal chief and *how* you can put yourself in a position to take them on. But perhaps the most important question that you need to answer is *whether* you actually want that additional responsibility.

We both believe that there are strong positives to taking on non-legal responsibilities. It will make you

more valuable to your enterprise. It will strengthen your recognition and “brand,” both internally and externally, which may expand your universe of outside opportunities. In addition, it will often create more opportunities for those in your department — both legal and non-legal, with members of the law department to move to other functions in the business.



My Chi To, EVP, CLO, and Corporate Secretary,

Voya Financial

The world of a “traditional GC role” being just the lawyer is disappearing. In highly regulated business, like financial services, a GC who views their role as purely legal cannot effectively protect the company and board. My Chi To, EVP, CLO, and corporate secretary at Voya Financial, commented that “the complexity and evolution of the regulatory and business environment, as well as financial and operational risks faced by some industries and businesses, require cross-disciplinary decision-making in a wide range of topics. Even if the GC is only officially in charge of legal and compliance, they are often members of governance or steering committees in other areas, including risk (e.g., cybersecurity, technology, and enterprise risk), ESG governance, business resilience/crisis response and AI governance. In addition, the GC can provide leadership on specific risk-related initiatives.” Thus, short of officially taking on an expanded role, the GC has informal ways to contribute, show leadership, and gain experience in non-legal areas, which may ultimately translate into an expanded role at that or another company.

The expansion of a legal chief’s responsibilities also creates potential opportunities for your team. When Roellig assumed the HR responsibilities at US WEST, it allowed him to put several of his high-potential lawyers in leadership roles in that group. Likewise, at MassMutual, having responsibility for compliance allowed Roellig to put one of the lawyers whose judgment he significantly valued as the leader of that group. These were tremendous developmental and growth opportunities for these individuals and those they selected for their teams — many of whom also came from within the legal function. As such, direct reports to the GC may want to ensure they are ready to expand their roles and can even look at ways to encourage their GC to be positioned to take on more responsibilities. It’s a win-win.



All of this has the potential to make you a better leader and a better lawyer. Mar feels strongly that his oversight of non-legal areas such as HR, communications, and corporate development have made him a better lawyer by providing him with context on how his legal advice and responsibilities impact the rest of the enterprise.

As Roellig and Mar can both attest, many individuals are at their best when challenged. Being provided additional responsibilities outside your core expertise can often function as an accelerant for your skill development, and can set you up for a future president, COO, or CEO role. And, finally, expanded responsibilities may come with other rewards and/or compensation.

Finally, keep in mind, in order to maintain legal privileges, you will need to carefully document and segregate when you are providing advice or developing work product as a lawyer as compared to a business function. This was a concern identified by 31 percent in the ACC survey — with 57 percent apparently finding ways to address this issue and not being concerned.

But it's not for everyone

That said, there are also valid reasons *not* to take on additional responsibilities. You may not be successful in the role, which could hurt your career or future at the company. You may prefer to focus on being an excellent lawyer. You may have limited in-house legal support and may feel that the organization is better served if you focus on its legal issues. And, of course, if your legal responsibility is assumed by others and you expand to exclusively outside the legal area, your legal skills may “degrade,” making it more difficult to transition back to a traditional GC or CLO role. Finally, unfortunately, some CEOs have not experienced the significant value CLOs can offer outside of law, and just don't see them as candidates for other functions.

You may also find yourself in a situation where you do not personally desire to take on more, or due to your personal situation, you may not have as much flexibility to do so. If you are asked — or you are told that doing so is the best for the company — you may need to weigh your personal desires against that of the enterprise and decide what makes sense for you. In those situations, you can often work with your CEO and the rest of the executive team to find a way to make it work.

Ultimately, you are the best person to decide if an expanded role is right for you, your career, and your personal development. But if you are anything like us, you should seriously consider it. Your new responsibilities and diverse perspective will add huge value to your enterprise, your personal development, and your career. It may not feel great in the moment, but you will be at your best when uncomfortable and learning new areas.

As Roellig's CEO at StorageTek would often say, “When smart people ask dumb questions — listen!” We have both at times felt unsure or uncomfortable taking on more. But in the end, we are happy that we volunteered — or, in some cases, were “volun-told” — to do more.

Ultimately, you are the best person to decide if an expanded role is right for you, your career, and your personal development.

If you currently serve in an expanded role: Congrats! We hope this article helps you perform those functions better. If you are considering taking on more: Good luck! We hope this article is helpful as you navigate that decision, and we encourage you to send us a note if you take on an expanded role.

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[Stephen Mar](#)



Chief Legal & Administrative Officer

Odeko

Stephen Mar is chief legal and administrative officer at Odeko, a late-stage private company that provides comprehensive operations solutions to thousands of coffee shops, cafés and other establishments. Mar oversees the company's legal, HR, comms, corporate development, corporate governance and risk functions. He also serves on the board of directors of the NYU Law Alumni Association and maintains an active practice consulting and advising companies (especially startups) and business and legal leaders.

Prior to Odeko, Mar was VP, global head of litigation and investigations at WeWork, the world's leading global flexible space provider, where he helped lead the company through a multi-year turnaround and a de-SPAC process culminating in WeWork's public listing in October 2021. Before that, Mar was a lawyer at Sullivan & Cromwell, where he represented multinational public companies in high-stakes litigation, investigations, and crises.

Recognized as a [2024 Top 10 30-Something](#), Mar is actively involved in various ACC initiatives.

Mar enjoys writing and speaking on a variety of legal and leadership topics. You can follow him on LinkedIn [here](#).

[Mark Roellig](#)



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Mark Roellig was previously general counsel of four Fortune 500 companies and now advises in-house counsel as a mentor and career coach.