



Solving the Talent Puzzle: Retention, Burnout, and the Role of AI in Modern Legal Teams

Interviews and Profiles



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The root causes of burnout for in-house counsel

“Burnout in corporate legal teams isn’t just about working long hours — it’s about systemic issues within workplace culture,” [Microport Scientific Corporation’s](#) EVP and General Counsel [Alice Flacco](#), explained. “Burnout stems from a combination of workload expectations, constant availability, and a culture that rewards silent endurance.”

According to this statistic, “80 percent of in-house lawyers experience stress and burnout in their careers, with 50 percent reporting it as severe.”

Some key stressors include:

- **Relentless multitasking:** “We’re expected to be gatekeepers, business enablers, compliance experts, and pricing managers all at once. We’ve been trained to meet expectations without complaint.”
- **Always-on culture:** “Research shows that knowledge workers, including in-house counsel, spend nearly half their workload managing emails.”

- **Visibility fatigue:** “Legal teams operate in the shadows. The reward for doing your job well is more work. But if something goes wrong, suddenly you’re in the spotlight explaining why and this imbalance can make you feel undervalued and overworked.”
- **Career trajectories:** “In-house roles often lack clear promotion paths and leaves employees feeling stuck despite high performance.”

“These factors lead to constant pressure and also the way we’re wired to perfection as lawyers,” said Flacco. Panelists shared their insights from an [ACC Europe](#) webinar, proudly sponsored by [Axiom Law](#).

AI: Solution or stressor?

While technology is often seen as a way to reduce workload, it also introduces certain challenges. [Robert Kretzschmar](#), technology lawyer at [Dell Technologies](#), considers himself a technical optimist and sees AI as a valuable tool. “I do firmly believe that repetitive and administrative work is going to get either eliminated or at least dramatically simplified by artificial intelligence and other technologies.” However, he also acknowledged concerns that “the next wave of AI will even more profoundly change how we work as lawyers and how law departments operate.”

Flacco pointed out that AI can help manage workload if implemented effectively. “We need to use AI strategically — implementing self-service tools, contract templates, and automated responses can reduce the manual workload for in-house teams.”

[Watch the full webinar here.](#)

Practical strategies for managing stress in legal departments

Set boundaries to prevent burnout

[Jennifer Tyson](#), head of legal at [Moo](#), highlighted the need for leaders to set the example. “There’s a cultural expectation to always be ‘on.’ But if senior leaders don’t take breaks, junior employees won’t feel empowered to do so either. We need to set the example.”

Practical strategies include:

- Blocking time for deep work;
- Declining unnecessary meetings; and
- Encouraging employees to prioritize personal commitments.

Smart meeting management

Meetings are one of the biggest time drains for in-house teams. Flacco shared her approach, “Before accepting a meeting, I always ask for an agenda. If I can answer the question in an email, I avoid an unnecessary one-hour call.” Tyson added: “We’ve structured our company’s meetings so UK meetings happen in the morning, while US meetings take place in the afternoon. This minimizes late-night work and helps manage time zones effectively.” Flacco also suggests implementing “no meeting blocks” or focus hours to allow for uninterrupted work and recharge. Robert states, “I encourage people to schedule fewer meetings and keep them short when they have to happen.” This allows for managing work-life balance especially across different time zones.

The power of saying no

Kretzschmar emphasized the need for in-house teams to establish clear priorities: “Legal teams often become victims of their own success — people come to us for everything. We need to align with top management on priorities and make it acceptable to say no.”

He suggested:

- Setting clear thresholds for legal involvement in contracts;
- Educating business teams on self-service legal tools; and
- Aligning with leadership on realistic workloads.

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Wellness checklist for in-house counsel

- **Prioritize self-care:** Schedule breaks, exercise, and implement personal time.
- **Set clear boundaries:** Define work hours and avoid after-hour emails.
- **Limit meeting fatigue:** Reduce unnecessary calls and request agendas beforehand.
- **Use AI wisely:** Automate repetitive tasks while staying mindful of oversight needs.
- **Learn to say no:** Align responsibilities with business priorities.
- **Foster a support network:** Seek mentorship and wellness programs.
- **Practice mindfulness:** Use meditation and deep breathing techniques.
- **Assess workload regularly:** Adjust tasks to prevent overload.

- **Seek help when needed:** Don't hesitate to reach out for professional support.

The future of well-being in legal departments

As legal departments evolve, so must their approach to well-being. Flacco summed it up: "The future isn't about working harder, but smarter with the help of AI."

By fostering a culture that prioritizes well-being, corporate legal teams can create a healthier, more productive work environment — ensuring they remain strategic partners while avoiding burnout.

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