Day in the Life: The General Counsel of 2025

Interviews and Profiles

Axel Viaene

When Axel Viaene isn't predicting the future of the in-house industry, he's leading a global team as group general counsel and company secretary at GrandVision in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

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6:00 am

Wake up to the sound of the buzzer. I used to have an alarm clock that tried to wake me with a blinking light and bird sounds, but that did not work for me. Get dressed while **browsing the news online** and checking social media comments on the company.

7:00 am

Breakfast with my wife. We are laughing as we recall the painfully inefficient way international agreements were negotiated in the pre-internet age and share our best fax machine mishap stories. Together we **shop online for a new pair of shoes.** Fortunately, we quickly make up our minds. Same-day delivery guaranteed.

8:00 am

I open up my **digital GC dashboard on my secure iPad.** On one screen I see all key legal metrics, including legal spend versus budget, number of open and closed legal matters per attorney on my team, number of contracts generated through the contract building tools, significant litigation status, important new legislation, next financial calendar milestone, and upcoming meetings.

8:30 am

Take care of an emergency in manufacturing. **One of our almost fully robotized plants** had a malfunction impacting production. Call plant director to discuss indemnities in the Master Purchase Agreement with the assembly robot company.

9:00 am

My driverless electric car pulls up to the house. I programmed it so that it is **connected to my calendar and knows when to pick me up** on time for my first meeting at the office. It is parked outside the city as city center Amsterdam eliminated all inner city parking in 2023.

9:30 am

After a short commute, I arrive at our office. **The car parks itself.**

9:35 am

The virtual mirror at reception directs me to the right office. Offices are much smaller than they used to be, as they mainly consist of meeting rooms and a few flex desks. **Access to all rooms is controlled by iris scan.**

10:00 am

Meeting with the **VP of business development on an important acquisition.** I patch in our M&A lawyer who lives and works in Lisbon. He gives a rough outline of estimated budget, timelines, and players required. This includes project management, M&A law firm, legal flex force and legal tech provider for the data room, and document analytics.

11:00 am

Meeting with our CEO. At age 40, she is one of the first of a **new generation of millennial CEOs.** She started her career as a blogger. The meeting is fast and efficient, and the main topic is the impact of the new General Data Protection Regulation 3.0 (GDPR 3.0).

12:00 pm

Conference call with the chairman of the board and investor relations director to prepare for the Annual General Shareholder Meeting in a few weeks. **The AGM is now completely virtual with shareholders attending via app.** I have the call in our Control Room.

1:00 pm

Lunch with the chief information security officer (CISO), who is telling me about the **latest techniques used by hackers.**

1:45 pm

I am **pinged by the company's compliance app.** The company moved from annual e-learning to shorter but more frequent app-based compliance quizzes. Fortunately, I get all 5 questions on the Code of Conduct right, so I am good to go for another quarter. The fact that I helped formulating the questions on the app helps tremendously.

2:00 pm

Meeting with the VP of sales. He proudly shows pictures of his 1992 VW GTI. He **complains about finding parts and fossil fuel gas stations,** then moves on to the new sales agreement template.

3:00 pm

Interview a candidate for the corporate securities lawyer position. She has had **5 jobs in 10 years, which seems to be standard with candidates these days.** I am very interested in how her

previous employers organized insider trading compliance.

4:00 pm

Cultural Induction Meeting with new employees from all over the world. Although **the company works largely virtual face-to-face,** meetings are still part of the annual cycle.

5:00 pm

Meeting with Store Development Team. Contrary to the projections of 15 years ago, retailers still have physical stores. **These stores, however, are much smaller, and are more digitally and "total experience" based.** Discuss permitting with the team.

6:00 pm

The car pings me as it is waiting at the front door. I pick up the shoes I ordered this morning as they were delivered to the office that afternoon. The car drops me off at home after a short commute and goes to the parking facility outside town.

6:30 pm

Dinner with my wife. Later groceries are delivered to the house. Thanks to the **digital link between our fridge and grocery store,** we are never out of groceries.

8:00 pm

All digital work tools switch off automatically. **New legislation imposes mandatory rest times for all digital users,** due to proven health impact of digital over-use. We go for an old-fashioned walk and step into a WiFi free café.

9:30 pm

Return home and **write a few paragraphs in my ACC Docket Article** on "The In-house Lawyer as Digital Operator."

10:00 pm

Continue reading a book on the Financial Crisis of 2020. It's hardcover as there is **nothing wrong with being old-fashioned at times.** Then it's bedtime.

Staff

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