

# General Counsels Forum

"WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL GC TODAY?"

Co-Chairs: Mary Ann Hynes, David Robinson & Tom Sabatino

**May 11, 2023, 9am to 7pm ET**

*Debevoise & Plimpton, 66 Hudson Boulevard, New York City*

## **MORNING:**

### **Continental Breakfast**

### **Welcome and Introductions**

### **Session 1: "The GC role is transforming and expanding at a rapid pace. What's our job today - and where is it going, for tomorrow?"**

Not long ago, GCs sometimes felt under-utilized. Now it may be the opposite. Fellow executives now expect the department to be a business partner. Many GCs now have a portfolio of other units to lead, from HR to business development. Some of us are surprised to be running strategy. We are now often the quarterback for intractable public policy issues, and ESG. How do we prioritize? What styles of leadership will succeed? How can we build the necessary bandwidth and new capabilities?

### **Session 2: "The business and societal environments for our organizations are a maze of contradictory forces. How should the GC be navigating them for the enterprise?"**

In a world of contradictory indices that rise and fall overnight, where the demands of ESG often compete with one another for attention, in unprecedented wars for talent and uncharted expectations for DEI, the GC is expected to bring ordered thinking and an ability to look around the corners to anticipate the unexpected. But how do we do this? What resources do we need? What competencies in ourselves do we need to sharpen or build? What should success look like?

### **Session 3: "What qualities do we need in our successors - And how do we develop them?"**

Some of what makes us successful today will be needed in the next generation of GCs: EQ, business savvy, the ability to manage complexity, are some of those qualities. But will the next gen need to apply them in different ways? And are there new areas of capability that we need to build in the future top leaders, such as AI fluency, societal and ESG competencies, and stakeholder relationship management? Does this call for new kinds of development for existing talent - or do we need to hire differently to bring in the right capabilities?

### **Session 4: Peer Discussions:**

Help Me Solve My Issue! (GC shares a challenge and peers provide feedback and ideas)

## **LUNCH**

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## **AFTERNOON:**

### **Session 5: "The People Factor: What do we do with Generation Z?"**

Gen Z epitomizes the new talent challenges that we are all grappling with. The Great Resignation has created holes in many organizations, and a shortage of new recruits. The resulting equation has generated unsustainably high salary offers, often for less qualified people. And Gen Z - who are the future - bring puzzling new perspectives, from a disinterest in office life to a seemingly transactional view about careers. In a function that is all about talent, how do we handle the new people factors?

### **Session 6: "We know the Benefits of ESG - How do we manage the risks?"**

The benefits of ESG are broadly understood. What's emerging more clearly are also ESG's risks. These include unintended consequences of seemingly positive ESG actions, as well as making promises that are not kept - or cannot be kept. In some situations, the GC is at the center of ESG work, and can 'look around the corners' themselves, but often it becomes a matter of developing the right mindsets across the executive team and with the CEO. How can the GC manage the risks - without becoming 'Dr. No'?"

### **Session 7: "Public Policy Positions: GC as Leader, or Lighting Rod?"**

Increasingly, GCs have public policy and communications in their portfolio. This reflects the expanding GC role overall. From some perspectives, these responsibilities enhance the leadership role of the GC for the enterprise and externally. But it is also an especially challenging area, particularly at a time of radically polarizing positions on almost every important issue. In this session we will look at the Roe v. Wade issues as an example of the real-world conundrums GCs face - not only of what to say, but whether to say anything at all, and how.

### **Session 8: "Hybrid work is here to stay. How do we lead in this challenging environment?"**

The pandemic has catalyzed the most dramatic changes in the world of work, since the industrial revolution. GCs must address the same workplace challenges as other top leaders, but also special issues that confront the law function. How do we create the essential trust-based relationships between our people, and our enterprise partners, on a zoom call? How do we build business-focused teams when some of the team is at home, and others in the office?" How do we need to rethink our leadership role to be effective in the new ecosystem?

## **Closing Comments**

**6 to 7pm - Cocktail reception**