

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: "What does success look like for us today - and what will it look like 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 a 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: "What the Board wants you to know."

One of the most critical relationships to get right as GC is with the Board. With the challenges of often conflicting and competing duties to the CEO, the ELT, and the Board, how should GC be thinking about their Board relationship? What are the biggest mistakes GC make? In this session we'll hear from a Board director as well as peer GC on what they've experienced.

Session 3: "Public Policy Positions: GC as Leader, or Lighting Rod?"

Companies are being asked by the media, employees, and state governments to publicly share their views on the socio-political issues of the day. The importance of ESG varies by industry and consumers and matters more or less to some for what they believe it represents (good policy vs. woke liberalism). What should the GC role be in helping leadership and the Board navigate the radically polarizing positions on almost every important issue? We'll look at examples of real-world dilemmas GC face - not only of what to say, but whether to say anything at all, and how.

Session 4 Case Study

Practice your skills in a real-world case study to see how you and your peer GC think.

Lunch

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AFTERNOON:

Session 5: "Turnover. Burnout. Quiet Quitting. How do we keep and build our high-performers?"

With quiet quitting, the great resignation, high rates of burnout, and the challenges of hybrid work, Leaders have to be better than ever at attracting and motivating high performers. What does the research tell us makes the biggest difference for engaging high performers? Should you focus on happiness at work or meaning at work?

Session 6: "Who should succeed us? How should we prepare 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 7: "What are the opportunities with AI? What are the threats?"

Fast forward 5 to 10 years, how much will AI disrupt business and the legal organization? There are both risks and opportunities leaders need to be thinking about and balancing. How can a leader today help the business, leadership team, and enterprise risk management process navigate the expanding challenges associated with AI including generative AI, ethics, fairness, transparency, and trust.

Closing Comments

6 to 7pm - Cocktail reception