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Day in the Life: Jeremy Barton

Interviews and Profiles





Jeremy Barton

General Counsel, KPMG

London, UK

6:00 am

Wake up to heavy rain drumming outside, roll out of bed, and grab my phone before its alarm shatters the quiet. Tiptoe downstairs to get porridge on the stove for my eldest child who has early lacrosse training at school. Thankful for underfloor heating! **Shower, tea, and BBC Radio 4's *Today* program** bring me into full consciousness. Listen to the latest from Davos before heading to the station.

7:00 am

On the 7:02 commuter train to London — **a moment of peace and quiet with the paper before catching up on reading, checking the ACC app**, and other non-confidential stuff (best not to risk prying eyes, even with a privacy screen on the laptop!). Bump into a CFO friend and we catch up as we leave the train, heading for the crush of the Underground.

8:30 am

Arrive at Canary Wharf — London's pumping financial district. **The open office lends itself to ad hoc catch-ups and ensures everyone can have a quick chat with me if needed** (especially since my desk is on a separate floor with the rest of the ExCo — all in open plan too).

9:00 am

Join a partner on my litigation team and a team of auditors who are preparing a presentation and Q&A session with the Financial Reporting Council, our audit regulator. A leadership team meeting with our National Markets business unit is next, principally to keep in touch with the latest developments in the business.

11:00 am

One of our division heads is concerned about a client's pressure to **get the contract signed in the next 72 hours for a multimillion dollar software implementation.** The head of the Technology Contracting team briefs me. Inevitably things are not as straightforward as the business folks believe — or at least want to believe. I give my view on what should be the showstoppers and when escalation will be needed.

12:00 pm

My non-interventionist tactics against a slipped disc consist of **15 minutes of core strengthening, followed by a quick sandwich for lunch.**

2:00 pm

My first discussion as GC with all members of our Public Interest Committee. These are external individuals who serve a similar role to independent non-executive directors in a public company, although the scope is tailored under the audit firm corporate governance code and our specific private partnership constitution. The conversation is both wide-ranging and specific, focusing particularly on how leadership ensures the right mechanisms of control and a strong values-based culture. A sobering topic, but a challenging and enjoyable dialogue means we could have continued for much longer than our allotted time allowed.

3:00 pm

Meet with the firm's head of Information Management, who understands the latest developments in this critical area of risk. **There is a continuous need to review and improve, as well as to keep protective measures top of mind for all partners and employees.** Today's theme is all about individuals' behavior rather than automatic reliance on technology and procedures.

3:30 pm

Some protected time to plan for next week's board meeting. **Finalize the pre-read for the agenda item on governance that I shall lead.** With some 600 partners, we need to ensure that our governance evolves with the growth of the partnership and therefore periodic reviews of governance are important. As one of the "Big Four" auditors, we have corporate governance that needs to echo the basic principles expected in the capital markets, but must also operate according to the nuanced concepts of a private partnership. I find this aspect of the job one of the most fascinating.

5:00 pm

Check-in with colleagues on the software implementation contract negotiations. Fortunately, the outstanding issues with license permissions and risk allocation have been resolved and it looks

like execution of the contract will take place in time to keep the business (and client) happy.

5:30 pm

Meeting with our chairman and senior partner to run over current items, ranging from external relations to my vision for the Office of the General Counsel. We agree that the goal is for internal legal services to increasingly involve enablement of the business on top of the ordinary transactional advice or document negotiation. **At a higher level, I am translating the firm's strategic priorities — to be market-focused and issues-led — into our department's strategy.** This means considering issues and challenges facing the business on a holistic basis and then engaging with colleagues in Risk Management and business to shape robust solutions.

7:00 pm

Dash onto the homeward bound train and catch up on some reading, before an **evening *en famille.***

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