



Asian Briefings: The Chief Legal Officer in Asia

Skills and Professional Development



Here are the top seven take aways from the chief legal officers roundtable discussion at the 2019 Association of Corporate Counsel Asia- Pacific Annual Meeting 11 April 2019.

1. The general counsel holds a privileged and powerful position. It's important that senior in-house counsel think carefully about how they communicate a legal position because during challenging economic conditions, the temptation is for management to push boundaries. However, staff will always think twice before they act against a lawyer's advice.
2. A constant challenge of the role involves balancing independence with the need to be part of the team. It's important to develop goodwill and credibility within the organisation. It's vital that the CLO thinks strategically and long term in order to support the legitimate and legal goals of the organisation.
3. The risk of a data breach is a constant one and needs to be taken seriously at all levels of the organisation. It's incumbent on the CLO to proactively work with the chief technology officer (CTO) to build a cybersecurity awareness platform and to develop ongoing training and security processes.
4. The life of the CLO can be a lonely one and even more so in a crisis. It's vital to have an outlet and someone you can seek out for advice and support. Sometimes an external senior lawyer can be the best source of support.

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5. For a new CLO, it's vital to develop an early understanding of the risk appetite within the organisation. Having the ability to succinctly identify the risk areas, assign weights, and communicate in a way that is widely understood is a valuable skill and leads to fewer conflicts and shorter discussion time.
 6. The challenge to do more with less is a constant one. Guard your savings and reinvest in the law department — on new technology, new staff, etc.
 7. CLOs should strive to create an “unbossed” culture in the legal department. Lean on your team. Don't pretend to have all the answers, but strive to create a team culture that fosters sharing and collaboration.

Many pundits are calling the coming century the “Asian Century,” because so much of the world's business will occur in the Eastern hemisphere. The year 2020 represents the tipping point for the future of in-house, as the sector continues to face a complex and dynamic political and economic situation and chief legal officers navigate their legal teams through this.

ACC will explore how legal departments can thrive through three learning streams: leading the law, leading the business, and leading the innovation.

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Staff

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