Chambers GC Influencers

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Programme
Introduction

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In-house legal departments are becoming increasingly significant within the Spanish market. The demands of driving growth in international markets encourage the steady increase in the functions required of the legal department and the emergence of new structures to facilitate successful outcomes. The general counsel and legal division general managers highlighted in this list are recognised for the contributions they have made and the examples they have set in the development of in-house legal culture.

Research Methodology: Our GC Influencers have been chosen following research among private practice lawyers and other in-house counsel. We identified the key areas in which GCs have displayed substantial influence:

- Effective management and development of an in-house team.
- Navigation of substantial business projects and strategic business change.
- Understanding the pressures faced within industry.
- Bringing diversity & inclusion and CSR to the forefront of industry.
- Ability to influence and respond to regulatory change.

Our aim is to celebrate excellence within the legal profession. Our GC Influencers have created best practice pathways endorsed by both private practice and other in-house lawyers. In spotlighting their achievements, this list encourages collaboration among the in-house legal community.
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José Julio Figueroa heads the legal department at Acciona. He joined the company in 2002 as part of the in-house legal team and has over 15 years of experience dealing with complex corporate and regulatory issues within the renewable energy sector. Also acting on disputes, he handled the high-profile ongoing controversy with the Catalan government, in which Acciona is claiming approximately EUR1 billion in compensation, relating to the early termination of the ‘Aigües Ter Llobregat’ contract, which managed the supply of drinking water in the region.

Figueroa is renowned for his international approach to strategic and transactional matters, with sources highlighting the company’s reputation for developing innovative processes.

He graduated from the Autonomous University of Madrid with a law degree and holds an LL.M. from the University of California, Berkeley.
Ana Buitrago
Amazon

Amazon Spain’s Legal Director Ana Buitrago joined the technology giant in 2012 after a ten-year stint at Iberdrola Renovables, during which time she shaped the international expansion strategy and coordinated its IPO.

She is highlighted by sources for her ability to influence and shape the industry, as well as for her strong skills in creating and organising teams. One interviewee asserts: “She is extremely competent in corporate matters and has the ability to choose the relevant expertise required for the matter.”

Buitrago’s responsibilities at Amazon involve managing all legal corporate issues and steering the company through a challenging regulatory framework, while maintaining a business-oriented perspective.

She started her career as an associate at Uría Menéndez, later obtaining an LL.M. from Fordham University in New York and working as a foreign associate at Brown & Wood. Buitrago moved in-house to Terra Networks in 2000, making her a pioneer in legal work for online portals.
Barcelona-based Eva Argilés currently serves as General Counsel for Applus+, having joined in 2013 after 13 years as a Legal Director at Puig.

She is a highly-regarded counsel who is particularly singled out for her understanding of how to manage complex legal issues across a multinational company. Her work includes defining international litigation strategies and managing commercial contracts and M&A, also well-versed in corporate governance and data protection matters.

Supervising a team of in-house lawyers based across nine countries, she garners praise for her team-management skills. A market commentator confirms: “She is very focused and in command of what is going on in a very multinational company.”

Moreover, Argilés is a member of the board of directors at the Association of Corporate Counsels (ACC), which encompasses promoting the role of in-house counsel and its importance within corporates.
María José García Beato acts as General Counsel at Banco Sabadell.

In addition to leading the legal team at Banco Sabadell, she is an executive director at the board and is a member of the board of several related institutions. She is a law graduate from the University of Cordoba with a diploma in criminology.

García Beato is highlighted for her influence and skills in the banking sector. She is singled out for her deft handling of complex regulatory issues related to the bank’s operation, with one source stating: “She is very bright and very tough when she has to be.”

In 2017 she managed the bank’s corporate residence move from Barcelona to Alicante, during the independence referendum in Catalonia. She also led the acquisition in 2018 of Planeta’s emblematic real estate in Barcelona’s Diagonal Avenue, part of the publishing company’s debt-restructuring process.
Isabela Pérez Nivela is Vice President, Legal and Integration and Development, and has been board secretary since 2016, having joined the company in 2013 as Group General Counsel. Since 2017 she also serves as Chairman of Andbank Wealth Management.

She stands out for her skills in corporate governance, risk control and compliance and her deft handling of corporate matters as well as the commercial strategy for the company. In a work highlight, she played a key role as a member of the negotiating committee on the merger of the bottling plants of western Coca-Cola.

Pérez Nivela is also highlighted for her academic work as a long-standing professor at ESADE Business School, and her public activity on conferences and seminars on the legal profession.

Prior to joining Coca Cola, she acted as a state lawyer, achieving the roles of Assistant Chief of Taxation Authorities and later Head of State Prosecution, both in Catalonia.
Javier Ramírez
HP

Javier Ramírez serves as Vice President Legal and Associate General Counsel at HP. He is recognised as an outstanding and innovative counsel and has been at the forefront of new technologies and digital developments at the company.

Market sources are swift to recommend him, with one stating: “He has been able to move through the most novel parts of the law, at the time nobody knew about IP, when nobody knew about digital – he was doing it,” further reporting: “He has been extremely successful in being in regional positions very early in his career and in his academic work, which has given him legitimacy and credibility to implement real change.”

Graduated in law from the Complutense University, Madrid, he has been a professor in IT and IP at IE Law School for several years and is also a member of the board of the Association of Corporate Counsels (ACC).
Santiago Martínez Garrido, Legal Director at Iberdrola, is an influential counsel who plays a key role in one of Spain’s largest corporations. An expert in regulatory issues related to the energy sector, he has shown commitment to dealing with environmental problems by being part of several initiatives such as Moving for Climate Now and transforming the Sustainable Development Goals from UNDP into the corporate governance agenda at Iberdrola. Moreover, he is a member of numerous boards at private and public companies, currently serving as director of Avangrid and Neoenergia.

Market sources highlight him for his technical expertise, with one interviewee reporting: “He’s really good technically and has had an excellent growth story. He’s a real expert in energy, is well known and is well respected.”

Martínez Garrido holds a law degree from the Complutense University and a diploma in Business from University San Pablo – CEU. Prior to joining Iberdrola, he acted as a state lawyer in several offices, such as the High Court of Justice in Catalonia, Castilla-La Mancha and at the Ministry of Internal Affairs.
Mónica Paramés joined Grupo Sanitas in 2000 as a Legal Director. Since then she has developed a stellar career in the legal department, currently acting as General Counsel for Bupa Europe and Latin America as well as General Director of Corporate Governance, Risks and Compliance.

She is highlighted for her skills, commercial awareness, expertise in healthcare and her views on the future of the legal profession, being a driver for change on the lawyer-client relationship and the way advice is provided to large corporates.

A graduate of law from University San Pablo – CEU, she also holds an LL.M. in Corporate Advisory from IE Business School and has completed additional courses at Wharton and Singularity University in the US.

Paramés also serves as President of the Fundación Sanitas (Sanitas Foundation) which promotes several initiatives relating to healthcare, ringing awareness on disease prevention, inclusion and research.
Oscar García Maceiras currently heads the legal team at Santander and is highlighted for managing a team of over 1800 professionals across the globe.

Well-versed in regulatory work and M&A strategy, he particularly stands out for successfully leading the bank’s digital transformation. One market source reports: “He is the most knowledgeable person I know in legal tech and digital transformation of the legal sector.”

García Maceiras is also recognised for his modern and progressive ways and is credited for contributing not only to the legal sector but to the bank’s business strategy. Another interviewee states: “He is a top guy, first of all, because he is responsible for the largest in-house team in the country by far, and clearly he has been innovative and adding value.”

Prior to joining Santander, he gained experience in the financial sector at Banco Pastor as a legal services director and following its merger with Banco Popular he took the role of legal advisor, later joining Sareb.
Madrid-based María González Ordoñez is currently a Legal Director at Google, heading the legal teams for UK, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Israel and Sub-Saharan Africa.

She is highlighted as an influential counsel who leads large teams and works across several countries and is well-versed in regulatory issues, IP, e-commerce, internet law as well as handling complex disputes including cross-border arbitration. She is credited for adapting a challenging regulatory framework into a company that constantly develops new products, and influencing the creation of new regulations to keep up with these changes.

After graduating in law from Complutense University in Madrid, she worked in private practice for market-leading law firms such as Uría Menéndez and O’Melveny & Myers, later obtaining an LL.M. from Columbia University in NYC. In 2005 she joined Skype as legal counsel.