Engaging content, networking and celebration with leading General Counsel and top ranked lawyers globally.

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Introduction

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Over the past decade, the role of in-house legal departments has expanded greatly. As such, General Counsel of the world’s most innovative and sophisticated companies and organizations are regarded as among the foremost thought leaders in their fields and at the forefront of all major market developments. Our Chambers GC Influencers are recognized for their ground-breaking work and impact on the legal community.

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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Amanda McMillian has a solid grounding in complex transactional and wider business law issues after having begun her legal career in the corporate practice at Akin Gump, experience which stands her in good stead in her current role as general counsel to Anadarko Petroleum. She assumed the top legal post in mid-2018, having also previously served as general counsel to Anadarko subsidiary Western Gas Partners – where she took charge of the legal team in the run-up to the company’s 2008 initial public offering.

Her transactional nous was called to the fore late last year, following highly publicized rival bids made for the company by Occidental Petroleum and Chevron, with Occidental eventually securing a USD38 billion agreement to acquire the company. McMillian and the legal team now face the tough task of finalizing the deal, securing regulatory approvals and handling its integration, however sources are confident in her ability to make a success of the challenge, reporting: “She thinks strategically on what the company needs to do to be successful and she has a great ability to hone in on what issues are important and what she needs to be focused on.”
David Leitch
Bank of America

David Leitch’s list of career achievements demonstrate his outstanding credentials in complex legal matters at the highest echelons of government, private practice and the corporate sector. Leitch’s impressive history includes a partnership at Hogan & Hartson, high-powered roles within the Department of Justice and the Federal Aviation Administration, serving as deputy counsel to President George W. Bush and being appointed as the general counsel to Ford Motor.

In early 2016, he took on the global general counsel role at Bank of America, where he oversees the 1000-strong worldwide legal function and also sits on the executive management team. He garners accolades from legal insiders who note the “deep strategic perspective” he brings to the role and who commend his ability to “take his strong legal and leadership skills and apply them to lead the team forward.”

Leitch has also attained an excellent reputation for his commitment to philanthropy and social responsibility, both through Bank of America and privately. The bank has an active pro bono program that advises on areas including immigration, veterans’ affairs and family law. Leitch is also a member of the North Carolina Equal Access to Justice Commission, which aims to improve access to justice for people of low income, and the Charlotte Triage Project, a referral system where legal aid organizations send certain cases to private practice lawyers.
Atlanta-based David Vigilante serves as senior vice president for legal at CNN and also as associate general counsel at Turner Broadcasting System (TBS). He is highlighted by legal insiders for his impressive work at the prominent news broadcaster, where he is responsible for overseeing all legal issues, including large corporate transactions and major disputes involving TBS subsidiaries.

In recent times, Vigilante has advised in several high profile litigation matters, including a suit brought against the Trump Administration over the suspension of journalist Jim Acosta’s access pass as a correspondent to the White House, as well as defending the company from lawsuit brought by actor Morgan Freeman after following a story accusing him of abusing a number of women.
Bernhard Goepelt, senior vice president and chief legal counsel at The Coca-Cola Company, has been at the beverage giant for nearly three decades in a number of senior legal in-house positions in Asia, Europe and the US.

He has attained a commanding reputation for his expertise and experience in counseling the senior leadership team, earning praise for his deft handling of all types corporate issues and his team-management skills, as well as his interest in promoting diversity and inclusion initiatives within the company. Market sources are swift to recommend him as one the most prominent general counsel in the US, with one source reporting: “He’s very strategic, thoughtful and universally respected by the board, his team and the people in Coca-Cola that he works with. He’s one of the most impressive, creative and sophisticated general counsel I’ve come across.”
Kelly Rose
ConocoPhillips

Houston-based Kelly Rose joined ConocoPhillips in September 2018 to act as the company’s general counsel and corporate secretary. She brings almost three decades of experience in private practice at Baker Botts to bear in her new role, commanding respect for her tremendous expertise and in-depth knowledge of corporate law, her experience in handling complex cross-border disputes and her skill in corporate governance issues and corporate structuring for public companies.

Interviewees are quick to praise her technical knowledge and commercial acumen, while also highlighting her team-management skills. One market source reports: “She’s very well-versed in the legal requirements, but also practical and can identify ways to accomplish business objectives in a way that doesn’t shortcut legal objectives. She really is someone who is just the epitome of an ideal general counsel, she brings so much to the role.”
Richard Rothberg serves as senior vice president and general counsel at Dell Technologies, where he is responsible for overseeing the global legal department as well as handling government issues, ethics and compliance. He has been with the company since 1999 and has held several roles in its legal department across the world, with stints in the UK and Singapore, overseeing Europe, Middle East and Africa and the Asia-Pacific region, respectively, allowing him to approach the company’s diverse legal issues with an impressive global perspective.

Rothberg is also highlighted for his efforts in promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace, playing a key part at Dell’s women entrepreneur empowerment programs, which aim to improve conditions for women in business. Commentators describe Rothberg as “smart and strategic,” with one source labeling his ability to advise on strategic business issues as “one of his greatest strengths.”
Randall Ebner has forged an undisputable reputation as one of the most experienced, influential and respected energy lawyers in the world today, borne out of his four decade-long career at oil and gas giant ExxonMobil. He joined the company in 1980 and has steadily risen through the ranks of the legal department, culminating in his appointment as general counsel in late 2016.

His role sees him lead a large global team of legal staff and wider professionals tasked with overseeing the operations of the world’s largest public oil and gas business, including its attempts to navigate a diverse range of regulatory regimes, major transactional matters and a raft of global disputes.
FedEx general counsel Mark Allen is a manifest leader in his field, with his long-standing experience with the company, which he joined over 35 years ago, serving as proof of his influence and contribution to the department. Having joined in 1982 after a stint in private practice, Allen has steadily risen through the department in a number of international roles, including serving as the Europe-based general counsel of FedEx Express, until taking on the top role in October 2017.

Allen oversees the whole gamut of legal and government affairs at the logistics powerhouse and its subsidiaries, not only locally but also at an international level. His key responsibilities include compliance, corporate governance and transactions, whilst also being involved in business strategy. He is noted for his global vision, which sources are swift to highlight, obtained from several years of working in FedEx’s legal departments as regional head of legal in various locations such as Toronto, Hong Kong and Brussels.
David Stryker was appointed general counsel of Texas-headquartered Huntsman in 2013. Prior to this, he acted as general counsel of BASF for almost a decade, associate general counsel at Siemens and also spent a decade in private practice at Kirkland & Ellis. His role sees him employ his “bright and intellectually-curious” demeanor to a diverse range of legal issues faced by the industrials company, whose recent major legal projects have included the ultimately aborted merger of equals with Clariant and 2018’s USD353 million acquisition of Demilec.

He is lauded for his broad legal and technical experience in the chemical industry, coming highly recommended as an influential counsel with strong litigation skills and in-depth knowledge of business strategy. One market source reports: “David is wicked smart, he’s able to see around corners and has an incredible instinct for understanding the strategy and a really exceptional insight into people’s motivations.”
Paul McNicol serves as executive vice president and general counsel of iHeartMedia, a role he took on in late 2018. His tenure began as the company planned for its emergence from its highly publicized Chapter 11 bankruptcy process, including a complex reorganizational plan to reduce the burden of its outstanding debts, with McNicol’s task now also including preparing the company for its proposed initial public offering.

McNicol brings a considerable pedigree to the role, borne out of his longstanding track record in advising corporations on their legal and business affairs. Prior to his arrival at iHeartMedia, he held senior roles at AOL Time Warner Global Marketing Solutions, Cendant Corporation and Six Flags Theme Parks.
Jeffrey Kaplan acts as chief legal officer at LyondellBasell Industries, a position he assumed in 2015 after first arriving at the company in 2009 from Chevron Phillips Chemical. His tenure in charge of the legal department has come at a time of significant expansion at the chemicals giant, with Kaplan and the legal department's transactional nous coming to the fore in the acquisition of A. Schulman and its proposed acquisition of Brazilian petrochemicals company Braskem, alongside work advising on the company on its multibillion-dollar plan to upgrade existing plants and develop new facilities.

Commentators laud Kaplan as one of the finest in-house lawyers in the US legal market, describing him as “a ferociously smart and collaborative leader who’s value and contributions as a top executive surpass the classic chief legal officer role.” Commentators also describe him as “dynamic and energizing,” skills he puts to good use in his additional roles heading the company’s government relations, real estate and corporate communications efforts.

Kaplan also dedicates significant time and effort into employing his legal skills to the benefit of the wider community. LyondellBasell has an active pro bono program where lawyers contribute their expertise on issues such as family law, estate planning and wider access to justice issues.
Marc Kesselman joined Purdue Pharma in mid-2018, marking his first entry into the pharmaceuticals sector after having previously served as general counsel to Yum! Brands, Dean Foods, PepsiCo Americas and the US Department of Agriculture. Prior to moving in-house, Kesselman also spent a number of years in the Department of Justice, the White House office of Management and Budget and practiced as an associate at Ropes & Gray.

His arrival at Purdue Pharma sees him leading the charge in the defense of the company against hundreds of claims over its alleged role in the country’s ongoing opioid crisis. The immensity of his task is starkly illustrated in the number of suits brought against the business, including actions brought by 45 US states, more than 1500 city and county governments and a number of class and individual plaintiffs, with Kesselman needing to call upon all of his accumulated experience to navigate Purdue Pharma through its current maelstrom of litigation.
Audrey Andrews is a highly renowned figure in legal circles, borne out of her outstanding depth of experience and knowledge of the legal, compliance and regulatory issues facing the healthcare industry. Her two-decade career at Tenet Healthcare has seen her charged with leading the company’s healthcare regulatory teams, a stint as its chief compliance officer and, from 2013, serving as Tenet’s general counsel.

Her skill in navigating the company on the intricacies of the highly regulated sector win her the acclaim of multiple legal insiders, who hail her skills as a “strategic, tactical and very pragmatic thinker” and commend her abilities to “make sophisticated business decisions.” Sources add: “Having come through a compliance role, she brings an in-depth understanding of healthcare compliance and the government’s expectations of healthcare companies.”

Andrews also receives plaudits for her commitment to diversity and inclusion, with commentators reporting: “While a lot of people talk about it, she believes it and lives it – she has a genuine appreciation that people who come from different backgrounds are key to informed decision-making.”
Rachel Brand
Walmart

Rachel Brand joined Walmart in 2018 to act as the company’s chief legal officer and executive vice president for global governance, as well as its corporate secretary. Her wide-ranging responsibilities include leadership of the company’s legal, compliance and regulatory affairs and its corporate security, aviation, ethics and investigative operations.

Brand arrived at the retail behemoth having forged a commanding reputation for legal excellence after a highly impressive career in senior public sector positions. Prior to taking up her role at Walmart, Brand served as the country’s first female assistant attorney general, the third ranking position within the Justice Department, as well as holding a number of senior legal positions within the Bush and Obama Administrations. Her career also includes serving as chief counsel for regulatory litigation at the US Chamber of Commerce and a stints in private practice at Cooper Carvin & Rosenthal and WilmerHale.
Ellen Whittemore, general counsel and secretary of Wynn Resorts, joined the company to lead the legal team in July 2018. She is an expert in gaming law who, before joining the global hotel and casino operator, spent 30 years as a gaming and leisure attorney in private practice in Nevada. Her experience in the intricacies of the sector stand her in good stead in her current role, with one of Whittemore’s chief tasks including advising the company as it deals with the fallout of sexual misconduct complaints concerning former CEO Steve Wynn, including a raft of changes to its leadership and a number of reforms to improve workplace culture, employee satisfaction and to empower new female leaders in its workforce.

Her efforts in defending the company through this challenging period earn her the praise of market insiders, who note: “It was a very difficult job, but she did a spectacular job. She came in and worked tirelessly around the clock and was very hands-on and very active in looking at all the major issues.”