

Risk Mitigation and Business Complexity is Driving Demand in Legal Recruiting



Demand for senior legal leaders is rising as companies, and law firms face mounting regulatory complexity, global uncertainty, and shifting risks. Boards and CEOs now expect legal executives to be not only technical experts but also strategic business partners who can influence decisions, manage crises, and deliver commercial impact. The bar has never been higher for legal talent.

At the same time, the hiring landscape is more competitive. Searches are taking longer, counteroffers are increasing, and retirements are creating succession gaps. Firms and corporations alike are prioritizing leaders who combine legal expertise with business acumen, cross-border fluency, and the ability to mentor future talent—making cultural fit and leadership presence as critical as technical skill.

“Risk mitigation has always been the core reason companies turn to legal counsel, but with growing regulatory complexity globally, and especially in Washington, clients want lawyers who understand how government works and how to stay ahead of shifting policy,” said Kristin Hebert, managing partner of **Caldwell’s** legal practice and San Francisco office. “They need counsel who can translate regulatory changes into clear, actionable strategies. Cross-border capability is also non-negotiable. As businesses operate globally, they rely on counsel who can navigate multi-jurisdictional risk and coordinate responses across markets.”

Searches Are Taking Longer

“In general, searches are taking longer, and companies are increasingly focused on retention,” she said. “Counteroffers have become more common as employers recognize the high cost of replacing top performers. At the same time, retirements are accelerating across the board. Senior leaders are retiring, and there’s a shortage of next-generation talent ready to step in.

Succession planning is at the forefront. To address the talent shortage, law firms and multinationals are hiring more strategically, filling key gaps now to avoid scrambling later. Hiring is no longer just about technical skills; it’s about finding people who can lead through complexity and build for what’s next.”

Business partnership comes first, according to Claire Meyers, a consultant in Caldwell’s board and CEO and legal, compliance, and privacy practices. “Senior legal leaders must be trusted advisors to the C-suite and board, sound judgment and integrity are table stakes,” she said. “Executive communication is critical, lawyers must be able to tailor messages across audiences, functions, and cultures. Global fluency and cross-border experience is highly sought after. The best leaders are hands-on, embedded in the business, and focused on performance. Talent development matters, too. Mentoring, building strong teams, and planning for succession. Clients tend to favor candidates with both top-tier law firm training and in-house experience. Candidates coming directly from the public sector or a law firm must prove they can deliver business-aligned, commercially focused counsel at scale and with a sense of urgency.”

BY THE NUMBERS

Something about Legal

Nearly all legal-department leaders expect to either add headcount or maintain it through the latter half of the year...

...yet **96%** say finding qualified talent is a major challenge.

Source: Robert Half

Ms. Hebert explained that clients prioritize technical depth, business acumen, and leadership. “Subject-matter expertise is expected, but today’s top legal executives must also speak the language of the business, partner with finance, and quantify the impact of compliance,” she said. “Boards want leaders with emotional intelligence, influence, and who offer a levelheaded presence during crisis. To assess candidates more holistically, top companies are using behavioral and psychometric tools. These evaluations help decode motivators, workstyle, and fit, they’re not decisive, but they are critical inputs.”

“One of the biggest mistakes is not engaging a search firm early,” Ms. Meyers said. “Trying to do a search internally can often waste time and drag the process out. We see organizations tapping into internal networks or known contacts, only to *(cont’d. to page 2)*



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find that the search goes nowhere while qualified candidates slip away. This is a dynamic market that demands a sense of urgency and organization. All sides need to stick to a timeline. When clients don't move decisively, candidates can get countered by their employers or move ahead in other processes. Not getting alignment on key criteria from stakeholders at the start of a search is another frequent misstep. Establishing this upfront leads to a more straightforward and cleanly executed process."

"Finally, clients sometimes forget to sell before they buy," said Ms. Hebert. "Top legal leaders aren't just filling a role; they want to join as a strategic partner. Candidates need to hear a compelling case for joining your organization, not just a list of role responsibilities."

"We've seen a significant increase in demand for legal talent, especially compliance professionals. Over the last 12 months, there's been a noticeable uptick in these searches across a variety of industries," said Dan Figueroa, a partner at **JM Search** and leader of the firm's legal practice.

"Uncertainty around tariffs has made it hard to forecast and budget in some industries, which impacts hiring," said Dudley Morton, a partner at JM Search and a member of the firm's legal search practice. "The regulatory landscape is shifting with the current administration, and legal teams are helping companies navigate the evolving regulatory schemes."

"We've seen a significant increase in demand for legal talent, especially compliance professionals. Over the last 12 months, there's been a noticeable uptick in these searches across a variety of industries."

"For law firms, there's growing demand for transactional attorneys—particularly those in private equity—who have portable books of business," said Mr. Figueroa. "For companies, they want people who've already scaled through the kind of growth they're targeting, often within the same industry."

"At the senior level, it's about being a strategic leader who understands the business, not just the law," Mr. Morton said. "Alignment with the company's goals, strategic objectives, and culture really matters."

"What are clients emphasizing more today really depends on the company," said Mr. Figueroa. "First-time general counsel hires need a combination of technical and strategic expertise. But if there's a team in place, it becomes more about strategy and leadership."

Strategic Business Advisors

"At the general counsel level, our clients are looking for a strategic business advisor—someone with strong legal and business acumen and the leadership ability to help the executive team drive strategic initiatives," said Mr. Morton.

"The mistake is hiring someone they know instead of someone who's already scaled a

(cont'd. to page 3)

IN THE NEWS

BarkerGilmore Appoints Strategic Advisor and Executive Coach

Boutique search firm **BarkerGilmore**, which specializes in building corporate legal and compliance teams, has appointed Mary Ann Hynes as a strategic advisor and executive coach. “Mary Ann is one of the most

accomplished and respected legal leaders of her generation,” said Bob Barker, managing partner of BarkerGilmore. “Her pioneering career, breadth of industry experience, and proven ability to guide organizations through complex challenges will make her an extraordinary resource for our clients. We are honored to welcome her to our team.”

With more than three decades of Fortune 500 executive leadership, Ms. Hynes has served as general counsel, chief compliance officer, and corporate secretary to five global corporations. She made history as the first woman to hold the general counsel role at a Fortune 500 company, and throughout her career, she has continued to be a first in many respects.

company through similar growth,” said Mr. Figueroa. “Familiarity gets prioritized over the right experience. The key is finding the right personality and cultural fit—when that’s misaligned, you run the risk of having a legal executive who doesn’t mesh well with the rest of the executive team.”

“It’s not about replacing legal professionals, but about driving efficiency, we’re seeing AI tools that optimize workflows—for instance, contract review—that perform those tasks quickly and efficiently,” Mr. Morton said. “One GC I placed said most of her team embraces these tools, but those who don’t adopt them are at risk of falling behind.”

“In the end it still comes down to portable business and compensation,” said Mr. Figueroa. “But as law firms have grown in size, everyone has the basic practice areas covered. The firms that are succeeding in lateral recruiting are the ones that define their market position—whether that’s high-end, midmarket, or lower middle market—and double down on their strengths.”

“The firms winning laterals are the ones that play to their strengths and respond to client demand by filling gaps where they may not be as strong,” Mr. Morton said. “Strong firms have strong brands—it’s less about being everything to everyone, and more about clarity and discipline in market positioning.”

“There’s no sugarcoating the recent headwinds, but the legal sector is populated by investors and company builders who are comfortable with risk and adept at navigating quickly changing landscapes,” said Teresa Reti, a director at **Occam Global**. “It’s in their DNA. As such, early-stage biotechs benefit from legal officers who compliantly facilitate risk. These are business people first, not bureaucratic naysayers, who sit on the executive team as strategic enablers.”

“Green shoots are already starting to appear more broadly in the capital markets,” Ms. Reti said. “As companies look to go public, we will certainly see an uptick in chief legal officer and general counsel recruitments in support of this milestone. And in this post-public

existence, CEOs seek more than business acumen. Strategic sophistication and board savvy must be coupled with a willingness to get tactical and hire a lean, right-sized team for the function’s maturation.”

“We look for senior executives who want to build enduring, innovative, and nimble biotechs, not empires,” said Ms. Reti. “This kind of quality is rare in mature, accomplished executives and is something we diligently seek, not just through referencing but by seeking careers that encompass periods of growth and contraction and the lessons learned that come from each part of the cycle.”

High Churn Rates

“The last few years have seen high churn among general counsel in key markets,” said Jennifer O’Connell, global leader of the legal, regulatory & compliance practice at **Russell Reynolds Associates**, shared with Hunt Scanlon. “Our latest analysis of the Fortune 500 and FTSE 350 GC shows that over half have been appointed within the last five years. At the same time, between 20 percent to 25 percent of sitting GC are highly tenured and unlikely to pursue a new role. This leaves few GC in the sweet spot of five to 10 years’ tenure that companies tend to look for in an external candidate. In response to this, companies are increasingly appointing internal, first-time GC. While these individuals may lack prior GC experience, their deep institutional knowledge, strong relationships and sector expertise position them well to step up into a bigger role.”

“Additionally, companies are becoming increasingly more willing to invest in external support for internal promotion and succession candidates, including leadership assessments, executive coaching and formalized mentoring programs,” Ms. O’Connell continued.

The role of the GC has become increasingly outward-facing, with many now explicitly overseeing corporate affairs, government affairs, risk and regulation, amongst other functions, according to Ms. O’Connell. “As a result, today’s senior legal hires often have a breadth of experience under their belt — not only within legal roles, but also outside of them — having contributed to strategic projects or managed profit and loss responsibilities (P&Ls) to enhance their credibility as business leaders,” she said. “We are continuing to see that organizations are looking for legal talent who serve as business advisors with legal experience, rather than technical legal experts. Additionally, organizations are also seeking top-class communicators who can navigate boardrooms with credibility and sophistication.”

“Top legal talent also must possess excellent judgement,” Ms. O’Connell said. “With such volatility, the GC is expected to balance legal and regulatory adherence with business priorities, all while keeping reputational factors in mind and making fast, well-calibrated decisions amid constant external shifts. As the conscience of the company, the board and senior leadership, the modern GC must be an intuitive risk assessor with excellent stakeholder management skills, and a natural leader who builds and shapes high-performing teams and future successors.”

Ms. O’Connell also explained that clients are emphasizing technical legal expertise when hiring top legal executives, but what truly sets top talent apart is business acumen

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and leadership ability. “Today, more than ever, clients are looking for legal leaders who are attuned to, yet pragmatic about, the external risk environment,” she said. “They also value leaders with a proven track record of driving transformation, who think at an enterprise level, and those who possess the confidence, presence and credibility required to operate effectively in the boardroom.”

“The most common mistakes companies make when recruiting senior legal leaders are that they can sometimes focus too heavily on candidates with specific sector experience or other perceived must-have criteria,” Ms. O’Connell said. “This narrow approach risks turning the search process into a box-ticking exercise and can cause talented individuals with transferable skills and fresh perspectives to be overlooked. As a result, the diversity and breadth of leadership capability brought into the organizations may be more limited.”

Over the past year, demand for legal talent has evolved in response to regulatory complexity, economic uncertainty and global volatility, according to Jessica Pezim, client partner at **The Bedford Group**. “In-house teams are under increasing pressure to manage risk strategically—particularly in areas such as privacy, ESG, cybersecurity and employment law - driving demand for legal leaders with specialized expertise and the agility to advise across multiple jurisdictions and evolving frameworks,” she said. “At the same time, organizations are scaling back reliance on external counsel and investing in stronger internal capabilities—particularly at the mid to senior level. This has heightened the need for commercially minded, hands-on professionals who can operate cross-functionally and deliver value in leaner environments.”

“Over the past year, demand for legal talent has evolved in response to regulatory complexity, economic uncertainty and global volatility.”

“Today’s legal executives are expected to be more than technical experts—they must be trusted advisors who bring sound judgment, influence and business acumen to the executive table,” Ms. Pezim said. “In an environment where uncertainty is the norm, companies are looking for calm, pragmatic voices who can interpret risk in context and contribute meaningfully to enterprise strategy. The strongest legal leaders combine technical depth with agility, sound judgment and business fluency.”

The Bar Has Never Been Higher

For both law firms and in-house legal teams, the bar has never been higher for senior legal talent, Ms. Pezim explained. “While technical expertise remains a baseline requirement, what sets candidates apart today is their ability to lead, influence and deliver results in complex, high-stakes environments,” she said. “In law firms, we are seeing continued emphasis on business development acumen, team leadership and sector expertise. Clients are expecting more from their legal advisors, and firms are seeking partners who bring not only strong client relationships but also a collaborative, entrepreneurial approach to practice growth.” *(cont’d. to page 5)*

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In-house, Ms. Pezim noted that there is a premium on versatility and judgment. “Senior legal hires are expected to engage at the executive and board level, provide clear counsel in moments of ambiguity and build high-performing teams,” she said. “Increasingly, companies are looking for leaders who have navigated inflection points - whether M&A, regulatory investigations, restructurings or international expansion - and who bring a steady hand and strategic mindset to the table. Across both settings, emotional intelligence, adaptability and cultural fit are critical. Legal leaders are shaping not just legal strategy, but also policy, culture and enterprise alignment. The ability to build trust, communicate clearly and influence across functions is no longer a nice-to-have - it is essential.”

“Overall, the market has shifted toward senior legal talent who can integrate legal insight into broader enterprise strategy while managing complexity, reducing outside counsel spend, and anticipating regulatory shifts.”

One of the most common mistakes is overemphasizing credentials at the expense of fit. “Too often, companies focus on where a candidate trained, the caliber of their current employer or their technical specialization—without fully assessing leadership capability, judgment and cultural alignment,” Ms. Pezim said. “Another frequent mistake is a lack of clarity around the mandate. The general counsel role varies widely across organizations, and without alignment on scope, expectations and what success looks like, there is a risk of hiring someone who is technically strong but misaligned with the business. Finally, cultural misalignment remains an overlooked risk. The GC is a visible and influential leader, often shaping tone at the top. A disconnect between their style and the organization’s culture can lead to friction, missed opportunities or early turnover. Successful searches begin with clarity—a well-defined leadership profile and a rigorous process that evaluates not only legal capability, but also strategic alignment, leadership presence and values fit,” she continued.

Organizations are taking a more proactive regulatory posture, according to Matt O’Connell, managing director, head of people, talent & legal at **True**. “Clients are seeking legal professionals who can build relationships with government agencies, key stakeholders, lobbyists, and associations that can advantage the company through proactive regulatory strategies without incurring unnecessary scrutiny,” he said. “This is most prevalent in heavily regulated industries like healthcare and financial services due to the critical impact of strong legal and compliance strategies on business growth in those sectors. There is also a growing mandate for a product mindset—how legal can embed itself with the product early on to get ahead of any challenges that may arise. This integration between product and legal can serve as a real competitive advantage.”

“Given the economic uncertainty, we’ve also seen a real juniorizing of roles within early to mid-stage enterprise software companies

because of the perception that legal only helps with the commercial aspect of the business,” said Elizabeth Palmer, partner, people, talent, & legal at **True**. “Due to this perception, clients may feel like they can get by with a more junior legal role. Additionally, economic uncertainty makes clients less likely to invest in a more seasoned legal professional because of the unknown path ahead. Lastly, there is a growing need for executives who can navigate evolving and nebulous regulatory terrains, especially with new and innovative technologies. This helps CEOs see around corners and mitigate potential second and third order risks.”

Speaking specifically to **True**’s expertise working with in-house legal departments, the most crucial quality for senior legal hires is being an executive first and a lawyer second. “In other words, senior legal professionals should operate as business leaders who facilitate value creation rather than merely enforcing rules and mitigating risk,” Mr. O’Connell said. “The best legal leaders optimize for business opportunities - whether that be unlocking revenue and growth or enabling product agility in the face of existential threats.”

“While technical legal expertise is tablestakes, business acumen and leadership ability, particularly embodying and engendering a growth mindset, are paramount for senior legal roles,” said Ms. Palmer. “As an apprenticeship profession, top general counsels prioritize training strong deputies, which serves as a positive signal for their leadership capabilities. The majority of our clients assume that anyone we put forth for consideration will clear the technical bar, and so the true differentiators are leaders that bring a business-first orientation with demonstrable track record of driving successful outcomes - both in and outside of their functional domain.”

The most common mistakes companies make when hiring legal talent are two sides of the same coin, according to Mr. O’Connell. “Namely, either over-hiring for capability such as bringing in a heavyweight for external optics without being prepared to leverage their expertise effectively or testing for grit and appetite to roll up their sleeves; or and under-hiring, which can lead to outgrowing a junior resource quickly,” he said. “Additionally, not allowing the legal function to report directly to the CEO can limit the talent pool and implicitly signal a lack of strategic importance for the legal department within the organization.”

“While AI and legal technology are rapidly advancing, particularly in areas like commercial contracting and legal operations, they are not replacing the core judgment and interpretive skills of GCs,” Ms. Palmer said. “Instead, the rise of AI necessitates that GCs strategically leverage these tools for efficiency and advise on the complex, nebulous regulatory implications of AI products, particularly concerning IP and downstream impacts in various sectors. A great general counsel understands how to embrace available tools, including AI, to create value for the business.”

“Clients aren’t making a choice between expertise, acumen, and leadership when hiring top legal executives,” said Ben Dewar, partner at **NU Advisory Partners**. “To be considered for a chief legal officer role, depth in all three is essential. In most legal leadership searches, technical

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expertise alone rarely separates a good candidate from a great one. No lawyer masters every area of the law. What matters is having the right depth where it counts most in their business—whether that’s regulatory, commercial, or complex transactions—and the ability to build a team that covers the rest. A legal executive’s role isn’t to personally manage every issue but to create and lead a high-performing legal function that’s tightly aligned with the business. Leadership here means developing a team of lawyers who operate with the same clarity, judgment, and commercial mindset as the CLO.”

However, Mr. Dewar explained that if you asked most clients to pick just one area they value above the rest, the answer would be business acumen. “Today’s top legal executives are business leaders first, functional experts second,” he said. “The best CLOs I know will tell you that their advice to CEOs and boards is as much about business strategy as it is about the law. They help think through business decisions, evaluate risk in context, and drive the leadership team toward stronger outcomes. As part of business acumen, every great legal leader will also have strong financial fluency. You can’t be a credible business leader without understanding the numbers — P&L, financial models, capital allocation. Without that context, even the best legal advice can miss the mark.”

At NU, they are seeing clients increasingly prioritize this holistic blend of skills. The legal executives they place are exceptional lawyers, but they’re also strategic thinkers and business leaders who elevate the entire organization.

“CLOs aren’t expected to be AI experts, however, fluency, curiosity, and a willingness to engage with the technology are now part of the role, Mr. Dewar said. “The first time I saw AI as an element of a candidate assessment was in 2023. Now it shows up in almost every process. Clients aren’t expecting a proven track record yet, but they do want to see a plan and a vision. How will this leader use AI to improve legal workflows and deliver more value to the business? At NU, we’ve been running numerous practical AI sessions for clients, investors, and portcos. One thing we’ve learned is that most executives are still in the early stages of AI use. But the gap between surface-level use and deep expertise is wide and will only grow, and the legal leaders who move beyond the basics will see better results—delivered faster. The future state CLO is a strategic leader who knows how to bring the best out of people and technology. That’s the direction things are heading, and those who arrive first will set the new standard.”

The past year has been marked by economic uncertainty, and, when faced with unpredictability, many companies become more cautious about hiring, according to Stacy Humphries, president of **Pye Legal Group**. “Cost-cutting and a focus on internal efficiencies often take priority. It’s no surprise, then, that in-house legal hiring slowed in many sectors compared to prior years,” she said. “Some industries—like energy—have gone through consolidation, while others paused hiring to wait for more clarity on government policy and regulatory priorities. We began to see modest improvement in legal hiring in Q2 of 2025, likely *(cont’d. to page 7)*



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driven by pent-up demand following a very cautious Q1. Still, with tariff uncertainty and other unresolved policy shifts, we expect the hiring pace to remain relatively measured through the rest of the year.”

Ms. Humphries also noted that a common misconception is that lighter regulation reduces the need for legal counsel. In practice, regulatory change, whether increasing or decreasing oversight, creates demand for sound legal guidance. “Companies need help interpreting what’s advisable versus merely permissible and assessing how today’s decisions will be viewed if enforcement trends shift in the future,” she explained. “In times like these, in-house legal teams play a critical role in helping the business navigate risk, stay compliant, and plan for what’s next—even when the path ahead isn’t fully clear.”

“Overall, the market has shifted toward senior legal talent who can integrate legal insight into broader enterprise strategy while managing complexity, reducing outside counsel spend, and anticipating regulatory shifts.”

When asked what clients are emphasizing today, Ms. Humphries said that substantive legal expertise still matters, of course, but at the executive level technical skill is table stakes. “What truly sets top candidates apart is their ability to lead, influence, and align legal strategy with broader business objectives,” she said. “Today’s GCs and CLOs are valued not just as legal experts, but as trusted advisors and strategic partners. They’re expected to build credibility across the organization, contribute to executive decision-making, and bring sound judgment to issues that go well beyond the legal function.”

Adopting AI

Legal departments are adopting AI and other legal technology tools at very different rates, according to Ms. Humphries. “Some GCs are early adopters, eager to explore how new tools can enhance efficiency and decision-making,” she explained. “Others are intrigued but unsure where to start. The landscape can be tough to navigate with a growing number of vendors, rapidly evolving tools, and little consensus on which technologies truly deliver the most impact. There is growing interest in tools that support contract lifecycle management, e-billing, knowledge management, and AI-powered tools for identifying relevant materials in litigation, accelerating due diligence in transactions, summarization, and in some cases drafting. But most legal departments are still in the experimentation or pilot phase: testing use cases, assessing risk, and building internal comfort with the technology.”

Over the past year, there has been more targeted hiring and less opportunistic hiring than in the previous several years, according to Shawna Rosner, partner, director of legal solutions group at **Direct Recruiters, Inc. (DRI)**. “Firms and companies are willing to hold out for a candidate who is an exact fit at a time when there is change and uncertainty,” she said. “Economic uncertainty tends to trickle down to the legal field. When companies perceive instability in the

economy, they are less likely to engage in deals that require the use of in-house and outside counsel. However, I have not seen a slowdown in hiring for litigation. Litigation filings are more resistant to uncertainty and will likely increase with regulatory changes.”

Ms. Rosner’s clients on the in-house side are looking for candidates who have business acumen. “They want to hire an attorney with the capacity to understand the business and who will have a seat at the table,” she said. “I see companies being more strapped for time and resources, so an attorney who can come in and point out what needs to be done, prioritize the legal needs of the company, and can take the initiative to get it accomplished is going to benefit a growing company. Leadership is also critical—especially when hiring someone to lead or grow a legal team. It’s unlikely a company will hire an attorney for a high-level position who hasn’t had any direct reports. On the other hand, law firms remain focused on making hires for their legal expertise. I don’t see law firms being as concerned with business acumen or leadership experience to get the work done, but they do look for attorneys with these characteristics for business development.”

Open to Making a Move

While partner recruitment is competitive, I think partners are open to making moves when their needs aren’t getting met at their current firm, according to Ms. Rosner. “The mindset that you have to stay at the same firm where you make partner has shifted a bit,” she continued. “Among the reasons I hear partners are open to making a move are that they don’t have the associate support that they need, they have concerns about the succession plan of the firm, or they want to continue to build their book of business, and a different platform will help with this. Firms differentiate themselves by the amount of transferable book they require to make a move, the path they offer to equity, their compensation model at the partner level, or even their expected billable hour requirement at the partner level.”

Over the past year, demand for legal talent has remained resilient, Steve John, partner at **John and Snyder**, explained. “We’ve seen a growing preference for lawyers who combine legal rigor with business acumen and can contribute beyond a narrow legal function,” he said. “This has, of course, been the trend for several years now. Regulatory developments, particularly in areas like data privacy, ESG disclosures, AI governance, and foreign investment, have driven increased demand for subject-matter expertise in highly regulated industries, including healthcare, fintech, climate, and consumer tech.”

“Organizations operating globally are especially sensitive to cross-border compliance and enforcement trends, fueling interest in lawyers with international risk management experience,” he said. “Overall, the market has shifted toward senior legal talent who can integrate legal insight into broader enterprise strategy while managing complexity, reducing outside counsel spend, and anticipating regulatory shifts. This favors experienced in-house counsel with a multidisciplinary range and strong leadership presence.”

Clients continue to value strong legal judgment and business understanding, but when it comes

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to hiring general counsel or other senior legal leaders, the ability to lead through complexity, build high-performing teams, and serve as a strategic thought partner to the CEO or board is now paramount, according to Mr. John. “That said, leadership alone is not enough,” he continued. “Clients also look for business acumen. They look for the ability to understand revenue models, operational drivers, and competitive pressures, and apply legal strategy in ways that support enterprise goals. Legal executives who speak the language of business tend to be more effective in boardrooms and executive teams.”

“One of the most common mistakes companies make is underestimating the breadth of the general counsel role,” Mr. John said. “Too often, the search is framed narrowly. It is too narrowly focused on a specific area of expertise or immediate legal needs without considering the strategic, managerial, and cultural leadership the GC must provide. This can result in hiring someone highly competent technically but lacking the executive presence, influence, or adaptability needed to succeed in the broader leadership team.”

“Another frequent misstep is failing to align internally on what success looks like,” Mr. John continued. “If the CEO, CFO, and board are not on the same page about the role’s scope, priorities, and reporting relationships, the search process becomes fragmented, and candidates receive mixed signals. This can undermine trust and slow down decision-making. I would add that many companies rely too heavily on titles and credentials rather than assessing leadership potential in context. A successful GC in one environment may not thrive in another if the organizational stage, culture, or risk profile is vastly different. Behavioral interviewing, case-based assessments, and values-based vetting are underused tools that can lead to stronger, more sustainable hires.”

Over the past year, demand for legal talent has remained strong, though it continues to vary by practice area, according to Lori Carpenter, president of **Carpenter Legal Search**. “As legal recruiters who predominately focus on in-house retained search, we’ve seen sustained demand for corporate attorneys over the past year, with that trend expected to continue into the latter part of the year. Additionally, there has been a notable increase in succession planning for General Counsel roles across both the private and public sectors.

“In-house legal departments are increasingly prioritizing candidates with strong business acumen, regulatory expertise, technological fluency, and the ability to lead cross-functional teams,” Ms. Carpenter said. “Equally important are adaptability, leadership, and interpersonal skills, which are essential for effective team building and fostering strong internal client relationships. Clients are looking for more than legal expertise. They want a trusted advisor. Strong strategic thinking, mental acuity and agility, and cross-functional collaboration are of paramount importance. Discerning and assessing risk is also at the fore when hiring GCs and CLOs. Senior legal leaders also must possess the integrity and maturity to set the tone for a team-oriented culture, where individuals excel while collectively working toward shared goals.” *(cont'd. to page 9)*

Meaningful Conversations During Hiring Process

If the legal search consultant and the organization do not take the time to engage in multiple, meaningful conversations with potential GCs or senior legal leaders, they risk missing critical insights into both experience and soft skills, according to Ms. Carpenter. “These conversations are essential not only for accurate evaluation but also for building the mutual trust and alignment that lead to long-term success,” she said. “Without this, hiring decisions are often made without a full understanding of who is truly being brought into the organization. As the search progresses, new insights often emerge that may require adjusting the scope of the role. Where you start out in the search process is often not where you end up, and it takes an openness to working through it to achieve the best result.”

“This is why engaging a well-vetted recruiter is so valuable,” Ms. Carpenter said. “A strong recruiter not only brings access to top-tier talent but also serves as a trusted intermediary facilitating the process, encouraging honest dialogue, building rapport, and helping to shape a successful and lasting partnership between the organization and its next senior legal leader.”

Over the past year, demand for legal talent has been shaped by an unusual combination of political, economic, and regulatory volatility, according to Marcus Ollig, president and founder of **The Advocates and Targeted Legal Staffing Solutions (TLSS)**. “The first half of the year was marked by uncertainty driven by tariff announcements, shifting enforcement priorities, and high-profile targeting of several large global law firms by the executive branch,” he said. “Law firm leaders invested significant time in client reassurance, internal consensus building, and contingency planning for reputational or operational impacts. Many also reassessed DEI policies—both in substance and in public messaging—amid heightened scrutiny, a process mirrored in many corporate legal departments.”

“At the same time, disruption has created opportunities,” Mr. Ollig said. “Large global firms are seeing increased demand for counsel on complex, cross-border matters, particularly from foreign governments and multinationals navigating U.S. policy shifts. Regulatory changes and enforcement trends in cryptocurrency, investment management, food and drug oversight, environmental regulation, and other sectors have driven growth in compliance, advisory, and transactional work.”

“Litigation and employment law have been particularly robust, fueled by economic dislocation, regulatory disputes, and workplace issues,” Mr. Ollig continued. “While macroeconomic headwinds persist, the net effect for many Am Law 200 firms has been neutral to positive, with specific practices experiencing sustained or increased demand—and positioning themselves for long-term growth. However, there is a caveat: This is not true for all law firms and not all corporate legal departments. Smaller law firms and certain kinds of boutiques, as well as larger firms not positioned to take advantage of these specific opportunities, are more susceptible to the current economic headwinds.”

While deep legal expertise and a track record of demonstrated results and success remain baseline requirements, the differentiators in today’s senior-level (cont’d. to page 10)



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searches extend far beyond technical skill, Mr. Ollig explained. He noted that law firms and corporate legal departments are increasingly prioritizing candidates who combine legal excellence with strategic business acumen. This includes the ability to develop and execute business plans, drive measurable results, and align legal strategy with organizational goals.

“Leadership and mentorship skills are also essential as firms strive to strengthen or uphold their culture and reduce turnover,” Mr. Ollig said. “Law firm and corporate legal department leaders often feel a loss of culture as people work from home, and they are gradually becoming stricter in enforcing a return to the office. Therefore, law firm managing partners and corporate legal executives look for leaders who can inspire, develop, and retain top talent, fostering a culture of collaboration and shared purpose. Emotional intelligence—once considered a soft skill—is now a decisive factor, enabling leaders to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, manage change, and strengthen relationships with both internal and external stakeholders.”

Demand has become more selective—but more urgent in critical areas, according to Mary Clare Garber, principal at **Princeton Legal Search Group**. “Companies are prioritizing regulatory, compliance, and data privacy expertise—particularly in life sciences, fintech, and healthcare—amid evolving global regulations and heightened enforcement,” she said. “Cost-conscious management has also fueled a shift toward bringing more legal work in-house to reduce outside counsel spend.”

Ms. Garber explained that executives with a strategic mindset and cross-functional credibility are top priorities. “Beyond legal acumen, leaders who can partner with the C-suite, manage enterprise risk, and align legal strategy with business goals are most in demand,” she said. “Candidates who can juggle multiple priorities, pivot in response to external pressures, and adapt to new technologies are not just marketable but thriving.”

“While technical skills remain foundational, clients want legal executives who can shape strategy, influence culture, and anticipate risk,” Ms. Garber continued. “For example, a tech GC was recently hired not only for IP expertise, but also for a proven ability to build high-performing, cross-border teams during growth phases. That said, in niche practice areas like IP, technical depth still carries significant weight.”

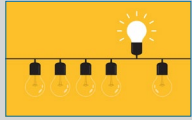
Ms. Garber also noted that some of the most common mistakes companies make when recruiting general counsel or other senior legal leaders is hiring for today’s challenges instead of tomorrow’s opportunities. “Organizations often focus too narrowly on technical skills or industry familiarity, while overlooking strategic foresight, cultural alignment, and leadership capability,” she said. “Another common pitfall is failing to align internally on the GC’s role and reporting structure. Companies willing to think beyond the box or industry are accessing a broader—and often stronger—talent pool.”

“GCs are now expected to evaluate and govern AI deployment across the enterprise, not just use legal tech tools,” Ms. Garber continued. “Candidates who can apply AI in areas like contract review, compliance, and

(cont'd. to page 11)

IN THE NEWS

Occam Places Chief Legal Officer at Metsera



New York City-based executive search firm **Occam Global** has placed Matt Lang as corporate secretary and chief legal officer of NASDAQ-traded Metsera, a clinical-stage biotech focused on developing the next generation of medicines for obesity and metabolic disease. Prior to Metsera, Mr. Lang had a multidimensional business career culminating in his service as chief business and legal officer of the public, clinical-stage cell therapy biotech, Lyell Immunopharma. He came to Lyell from Myovant, where he strategically built the legal and administrative functions of the company and guided the organization through its \$2.9 billion acquisition by Sumitomo Pharma.

litigation management are getting a second look. Increasingly, boards are looking for GCs who can help shape company-wide AI policy and oversight.”

Navigating Business Uncertainty

Over the past year, demand for legal talent has shifted notably, according to David Walden, managing director, co-CEO of **E.P. Dine** and leader of the law firm practice group at **ZRG**. “Companies are no longer just seeking technically strong lawyers—they want legal leaders who are strategic, tech-savvy, and capable of navigating regulatory complexity and business uncertainty,” he said. “We’re hearing consistent calls for expertise in areas like AI governance, data privacy, and cybersecurity, along with a strong grasp of how to run lean, efficient legal operations. Foundational legal training still matters, but what sets candidates apart today is adaptability, business acumen, and the ability to lead through change. When we tap into our network, we look for those exceptional individuals who’ve gone beyond traditional legal roles to become true strategic partners to the business—and that’s exactly what CEOs and boards are prioritizing in this environment.”

Mr. Walden told Hunt Scanlon Media that business acumen of senior-level hires is of utmost importance today. “While technical expertise of a senior lawyer is a relevant qualification, the business IQ of the senior lawyer is a significant differentiator for law firms and in-house legal departments who are hiring during the uncertain times (economically, geopolitically, etc.) in the world today and for the foreseeable future,” he said.

While most of our clients will not compromise on any of the three, business acumen would be the one where CEOs lean most towards,” Mr. Walden explained. Why? “Leadership skills can often be developed/refined, and any technical gaps can often be managed by others within the legal team or external counsel,” he said. “Commerciality or business acumen speaks to how a particular individual is wired. Understanding the business so that one can enable it, in the midst of huge geopolitical, economic, regulatory, and technological (AI) change and uncertainty is something that cannot be underestimated. More than ever, GCs are required to be incredibly creative when finding solutions for the

businesses they serve. Thinking business through the lens of legal is the theme of the day.”

One common mistake is prioritizing pedigree over fit. “A Fortune 500 company might default to hiring a GC with elite credentials and public company experience, but overlook whether the candidate can navigate internal politics, drive cross-functional alignment, or lead a large, complex team,” Mr. Walden said. “Conversely, startups often hire a technically sharp lawyer who lacks the strategic agility and business mindset needed to scale with the company. Another misstep is not aligning the GC’s background with the company’s growth stage and risk profile.”

“Companies also frequently underestimate the importance of cultural fit and the GC’s ability to influence beyond the legal function,” Mr. Walden continued. “Both large and small companies may overlook the need for a forward-thinking leader who can adopt legal tech, manage cost, and anticipate future legal challenges, especially as AI and compliance demands evolve. The best hires happen when the legal role is defined not just by legal needs, but by the business’s strategic trajectory.”

Andrea Bricca, managing partner at **DHR Global**, is seeing increased demand from the firm’s international clients, particularly those with U.S. operations but headquartered abroad, for candidates who understand the U.S. regulatory environment from both immediate and strategic perspectives. “Lawyers operating in today’s regulatory and economic climate must be able to address urgent needs without becoming too attached to the current state of affairs, as conditions can change rapidly,” she said. “In other words, they need to be nimble. At the same time, they must be able to see around corners, to anticipate potential scenarios that could arise tomorrow, next week, or next month.”

One of the most common missteps DHR has seen in hiring senior legal leaders is a misalignment between the job description and the actual expectations of the role. “Companies often seek candidates with strong business acumen and the ability to serve as strategic business partners,” Ms. Bricca said. “However, once hired, these general counsel professionals may find themselves confined to traditional legal tasks, essentially functioning as outside counsel within the organization. Many business-minded GCs have a proven track record of integrating legal expertise into business strategy. Yet, when the role is narrowly scoped to legal advice alone, it not only limits their impact but also leads to frustration on both sides. In some cases, it becomes evident that the company may have needed a commercial contracts attorney rather than a true strategic legal leader. This kind of misalignment inevitably results in disappointment and underperformance.”

“This disconnect can also influence how the legal department, and the GC role itself, is perceived within the organization,” Ms. Bricca continued. “For public companies or nonprofits, candidates often review corporate filings. If the GC is not listed as a Section 16 officer, it raises questions about the role’s visibility and value within the company. Organizations must be prepared to clearly articulate the appropriate importance of the GC role and provide a compelling narrative that reflects its strategic significance.” (cont’d. to page 12)

While we haven't seen a significant number of in-house clients explicitly requesting expertise in AI or legal technology, there is a clear and growing demand for lawyers who have successfully navigated periods of legal and regulatory change, Ms. Bricca explained. "At this moment, AI and legal tech represent exactly that kind of shift," she said. "Legal judgment remains the cornerstone of effective attorney hiring. It's this judgment that will ultimately guide the thoughtful implementation and strategic use of emerging technologies within legal departments and across organizations. Understanding the impact of these tools and how to apply them efficiently and ethically requires more than technical know-how; it requires sound legal reasoning."

DHR is seeing lawyers recognize that AI can be highly effective in handling non-value-added or administrative tasks, particularly in areas like compliance. "This opens the door to what could be a new golden era for attorneys who want to focus on high-value, complex advisory work where human judgment is irreplaceable," Ms. Bricca said. "Smart, ambitious lawyers are stepping up to lead in these emerging areas. For younger attorneys, especially, this is a unique opportunity to add value by developing expertise in fields where even senior colleagues may not have deep experience. We saw a similar trend with the rise of privacy and cybersecurity law in recent years. Today, lawyers looking to distinguish themselves in competitive in-house environments are embracing new ways to manage legal risk and drive innovation."

James McMahon, partner at **Shapiro Legal Search**, has noticed demand shifting in line with both economic uncertainty and changing regulations. "Litigation has remained a steady area of growth, especially in commercial disputes, employment matters, and newer areas like privacy and AI," he said. "On the corporate side, M&A and deal work has been fairly flat, but there's been more focus on restructuring and liability-management strategies rather than traditional bankruptcies. Regulatory changes have been a big driver, too. Things like the SEC's climate disclosure rules, evolving AI regulations, and consumer protection measures have all kept compliance and governance front and center for clients. As a result, firms seem to be prioritizing litigators, compliance specialists, and restructuring lawyers, while being more cautious about transactional hiring. Overall, the strongest demand is in areas where regulation, risk, and economic pressure intersect—litigation, investigations, compliance, and restructuring—while transactional growth tends to depend more on specific industries or regulatory developments."

Today, law firms and in-house legal departments are prioritizing senior-level hires who combine technical excellence with business-oriented, strategic insight, according to Mr. McMahon. "For law firms, there is strong demand for partners who can bring portable books of business, especially in countercyclical or growth practices such as litigation, investigations, regulatory compliance, restructuring, and energy transition," he said. "Firms are also seeking leaders with proven client-development skills, the ability to cross-sell across practices, and credibility in handling complex, multi-jurisdictional matters. In-house departments, meanwhile, are placing increasing emphasis on senior counsel and general counsels who can serve as

(cont'd. to page 13)



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“Regulatory experience is particularly valued, with expertise in emerging areas such as data privacy, AI governance, ESG, cybersecurity, and financial services compliance in high demand,” Mr. McMahon added. “Leadership and management skills have also risen to the forefront, as organizations want senior lawyers who can build and guide teams, oversee outside counsel efficiently, and drive diversity and inclusion initiatives. Across both firms and companies, there is a premium on adaptability, strong communication skills, and the ability to anticipate how regulatory and economic changes will impact the business. In short, the most competitive candidates today are not only subject-matter experts but also strategic advisors who can deliver measurable value, manage complexity, and align legal strategy with broader organizational goals.”

Multifaceted Leadership Role

One of the most common mistakes companies make when recruiting senior legal leaders is approaching the search as if they were hiring purely for technical legal skills rather than for a multifaceted leadership role, Mr. McMahon explained. “While legal expertise is critical, overemphasizing it can lead to overlooking candidates who bring broader business judgment, leadership ability, or cultural alignment with the organization,” he said. “Another frequent pitfall is failing to clearly define the scope and strategic priorities of the role before launching the search. Without alignment among executives and the board on whether the general counsel is expected to act primarily as a compliance steward, a business partner, or a strategic advisor, the process can produce mismatched hires who struggle to meet expectations.”

“Companies also sometimes underestimate the importance of soft skills such as communication, emotional intelligence, and the ability to influence decision-making across functions,” Mr. McMahon added. “Organizations may not adequately consider the candidate’s ability to build and lead high-performing teams, which is increasingly essential as legal departments grow in complexity. Finally, some companies move too quickly, relying on existing networks rather than conducting a thorough search, which can limit diversity and exclude candidates with fresh perspectives. Successful recruitment of senior legal leaders requires balancing technical credibility with business insight, cultural fit, and leadership vision, while taking the time to clearly define the role and cast a wide, inclusive net.”

“The legal industry is in the midst of one of the most competitive lateral partner markets in recent memory,” said Christina Boulougouris, founder and president of **Arete Consultants, Inc.** “By mid-2025, partner hiring was already up 11 percent year over year, with litigation leading the surge and corporate following close behind.”

“Finance, secondaries, private credit, and large-cap M&A and private equity partners continue to be in exceptionally high demand. Other areas showing notable partner movement this year include labor and employment, real estate, and intellectual property. At the same time, client needs, regulatory

(cont'd. to page 14)

shifts, and advances in technology are driving increased demand across AI, data centers, cybersecurity and privacy, digital assets, payment systems, antitrust, and international trade,” she said. “While mid-market M&A has remained soft due to policy uncertainty and a challenging macroeconomic environment, demand for global M&A and private equity megadeal talent, especially for transactions valued above \$10 billion, has been extremely strong. Rainmakers in this space are now commanding compensation packages reaching as high as \$35 million. Fueled by data center development and major energy buildouts, global dealmaking is on track to surpass \$4 trillion this year, with the fourth quarter set to be the strongest since 2021. Top firms are moving quickly to position themselves for these mandates, further intensifying competition for partners capable of leading the most complex and high value matters.”

“While pay remains a powerful driver, lateral moves are also shaped by practice alignment, firm strategy, leadership changes, billing pressures, and cultural fit. Non-equity partners, in particular, often move to secure equity status or to overcome structural bottlenecks that limit advancement.”

Partner movement in Big Law has accelerated, driven by expanding opportunity and shifting firm dynamics, Ms. Boulougouris explained. “Today’s partners are less anchored to a single firm and increasingly motivated to maximize compensation and career growth during their peak years,” she noted. “While pay is a powerful driver, lateral moves are also shaped by practice alignment, firm strategy, leadership changes, billing pressures, and cultural fit. Non equity partners often move to secure equity status or to overcome bottlenecks to advancement. Movement is also sparked when rainmakers change firms, frequently followed by entire teams, which only intensifies competition throughout the market.”

“To stand out, firms are going beyond compensation, although financial incentives remain significant with make whole packages and signing bonuses now common for top players,” Ms. Boulougouris said. “Increasingly, firms are differentiating themselves by offering clearer advancement paths, stronger recognition for contributions, and more flexible work options. Some are expanding benefits around parental leave, health and wellness, and mental health support, while others are experimenting with fully remote platforms that give partners greater autonomy. The firms that succeed will be those that align financial rewards with career development and show a real commitment to professional growth and personal wellbeing.”

“In this environment, firms cannot afford to recruit reactively,” according to Ms. Boulougouris. “To succeed, they must articulate a clear growth strategy for each partner hire and every practice they aim to build,” she said. “Candidates consistently tell me they will only consider a move if they understand the firm’s long-term vision for both the practice and their role within it. Articulating that vision and partnering with trusted recruiters to target the right candidates is now essential.”

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SPOTLIGHT

How Law Firms Are Redefining Partner Recruitment in the Age of AI and Regulation



CenterPeak is the premier talent advisor and growth partner to the world's elite law firms. CenterPeak was created in 2023 when Johnson Downie and Lippman Jungers founders Clint Johnson, Sabina Lippman, and Mark Jungers came together to create the leading law firm

partner recruiting firm in the world. Already dominant in New York, California, and Texas, the newly combined firm quickly established beachheads in Washington, London, Chicago, and Miami, luring other industry giants who shared the founders' vision. Today, CenterPeak facilitates more elite lateral partner moves than any of its competitors, by a wide margin. Combined, CenterPeak's partners have placed more than 2,800 law firm partners and opened over 50 new offices for AmLaw 50 firms across the globe.

"We talked with clients for two years about which firms and recruiters they like and used most for their most critical needs," Mr. Johnson said. "Client after client said... 'Lippman Jungers.' Merger discussions ensued and took 15 months to culminate." Mr. Johnson noted that the impact on existing clients of Johnson Downie and Lippman Jungers was hugely positive. "It is the biggest reason we did it," he said. "Now we can do more for the clients that loved us both separately. The combination has made us the strongest and biggest by revenue lateral partner recruiting firm in the world. We are especially proud of the relationships we have forged with the dynamic leaders of the world's most profitable law firms and the trust they have placed in us as key strategic advisors."

As president and CEO of CenterPeak, Mr. Johnson leads the board of directors. He has been recognized repeatedly in Lawdragon's Global 100 Leaders in Legal Strategy & Consulting, and his work in developing a collaborative professional services model has resulted in an environment of teamwork with market-changing results.

Mr. Johnson recently sat down with **Hunt Scanlon Media** to discuss the evolving demand for top legal talent, the qualities firms value most in senior hires, and how AI and market forces are reshaping partner recruitment.

Clint, how has the demand for legal talent shifted over the past year, particularly in response to regulatory changes or economic uncertainty?

We've seen sustained demand for high-performing legal talent—especially at the elite level. Economic uncertainty hasn't slowed the lateral market at the top tier—in fact, firms are doubling down on recruiting proven partners and groups who can bring immediate value. Regulatory shifts (particularly around data privacy, ESG and AI) are also fueling demand for specialized expertise. Law firms are being more surgical in their hiring but as aggressive as ever.

What qualities or experiences are law firms and in-house legal departments prioritizing most in their senior-level hires today?

I'd say law firms are laser-focused on two things: client relationships and cultural fit. They want partners who have a track record of

building business and who can integrate seamlessly into the firm's long-term strategic plan. In-house departments are prioritizing versatility. They're looking for senior counsel who can blend technical legal depth with operational fluency—hires who can advise the C-suite one day and then navigate a regulatory issue the next.

What are clients emphasizing more today—technical legal expertise, business acumen, or leadership ability—when hiring top legal executives?

The truth is, it's no longer enough to be just a brilliant lawyer. At the senior-most levels, our clients are prioritizing business acumen and leadership ability over pure legal technicality. They want trusted advisors who understand the business—not just the law—and who can inspire teams, drive growth and represent the firm or company. Really, the best legal leaders today really think like business owners.

What are some of the most common mistakes companies make when recruiting general counsel or other senior legal leaders?

Great question. The biggest misstep we see is hiring for today's problems instead of tomorrow's potential. Too often, companies react to a specific issue—something like a litigation threat or regulatory challenge—and select a candidate based on that alone. But great general counsel are strategic architects and companies should be asking: "Can this person lead us through our next chapter, not just the next quarter?" Skipping cultural due diligence is another frequent mistake—chemistry matters more than most people realize.

With the rise of AI and legal tech, are you seeing changes in the skill sets or strategic expectations for legal executives?

Absolutely. While AI isn't replacing lawyers, it's certainly transforming the practice of law. We're seeing growing demand for legal executives who are tech-forward—those who understand how to leverage AI and legal ops platforms to drive efficiency. In firms and in-house alike, there's a growing expectation that leaders not only embrace innovation but are champions of it and that mindset is really becoming a competitive differentiator.

Partner recruitment has become increasingly competitive—what are the key factors driving lateral partner moves today, and how are firms differentiating themselves to attract top talent?

Lateral partners today are looking for two things: platform and alignment. They want to be somewhere that enhances their ability to serve clients and where the firm's strategy, culture and economics align with their own values and ambition. Compensation certainly matters (of course)...but what really moves the needle is whether a firm offers runway for continued and sustained growth. The most successful firms are the ones who communicate a compelling vision and then deliver on it post hire. That follow-through is what builds real momentum in the lateral market.

SPOTLIGHT

Beyond Expertise: How BarkerGilmore Identifies and Develops Transformative Legal Leaders

Robert Barker



John Gilmore

BarkerGilmore is a boutique recruiting firm specializing in executive search and selection in law and compliance. With a network of advisors and recruiters spanning the U.S., the firm consistently places

talent at leading consumer, energy, financial, healthcare, industrial, and technology companies.

Robert Barker is co-founder, managing partner, and chair of the industrial practice at BarkerGilmore. He brings over three decades of executive search and international business experience to his clients.

John Gilmore is the co-founder and managing partner of BarkerGilmore. With more than three decades of experience in executive search, he has skillfully navigated BarkerGilmore on its path to becoming the highest quality boutique in-house legal, compliance officer, and leadership advisory firm in the country.

In this exclusive conversation with BarkerGilmore, **Hunt Scanlon Media** explores how the firm's specialized approach—shaped by former Fortune 500 general counsel and chief compliance officers—goes beyond technical expertise to identify and support legal and compliance leaders who drive lasting organizational impact.

How does your CustomFit assessment process evaluate not just technical legal and compliance expertise, but also leadership, business acumen, and cultural fit?

Gilmore: Our CustomFit assessment process is built on the direct input of BarkerGilmore's distinguished team of former Fortune 500 general counsel and chief compliance officers. Their experience in leading global legal and compliance functions informs how we evaluate not only technical expertise, but also leadership capabilities, EQ, risk tolerance, and business judgment. We incorporate structured behavioral interviews to assess how candidates will perform within the client's unique environment. This rigorous, practitioner-informed approach ensures we identify leaders who are not only technically strong, but also possess the influence, strategic insight, and cultural alignment to drive lasting impact.

Can you share examples of how your strategic advisors and coaches have contributed to the successful onboarding or leadership development of newly placed GCs or CCOs?

Barker: Our strategic advisors and coaches are former Fortune 500 GCs and CCOs who bring practical, lived experience. For example, one newly placed general counsel at a Fortune 200 company engaged in coaching to strengthen boardroom presence and enhance cross-functional influence, accelerating credibility with senior leadership. Another CCO at a global financial services firm partnered with a coach to navigate a complex regulatory landscape and build out a compliance function from the ground up. In both cases, the coaching relationship helped translate technical expertise

into organizational impact, dramatically shortening the time to full effectiveness.

With your impressive 66 percent placement rate for women and underrepresented candidates, what proactive strategies do you use to source and retain diverse executive talent?

Gilmore: We start by building intentional pipelines. Our relationships with diverse legal and compliance leaders, combined with data-driven outreach strategies, expand candidate pools well beyond traditional networks. We also actively partner with professional affinity organizations and maintain ongoing engagement with high-potential diverse executives long before a search begins. Retention is addressed through our coaching practice, where we provide tailored support for new hires to ensure they are set up for long-term success. These efforts collectively result in a sustained track record of advancing diversity in leadership ranks.

How do you tailor your approach for high-profile or particularly sensitive searches where confidentiality is paramount?

Barker: Discretion is a core part of our process. For highly sensitive or public-facing searches, we employ a bespoke search strategy that limits knowledge of the engagement to only essential stakeholders. We use coded project names, confidential candidate outreach techniques, and tightly controlled communications. Our team's credibility within the legal and compliance community means candidates trust us with confidential conversations, enabling us to attract top-tier talent while protecting the client's privacy at every step.

What distinguishes BarkerGilmore's network and candidate pipeline from broader or more generalized search firms?

Gilmore: Our specialization is our advantage. BarkerGilmore focuses exclusively on legal and compliance, giving us unparalleled access to a curated network of proven leaders. Unlike generalist firms, we know the nuanced skills, leadership qualities, and cultural factors that define success in these roles. Our advisors and coaches, all former GCs and CCOs, provide firsthand insight that informs candidate evaluation. This specialization allows us to deliver candidates who not only fit the role but also elevate the function within the enterprise.

How do you measure long-term success beyond placement—such as team performance improvements or strategic impact driven by the new hire?

Barker: We measure success not by the placement itself, but by the outcomes that follow. Our clients consistently report accelerated team performance, improved risk management, stronger governance practices, and enhanced strategic contributions from their legal and compliance leaders. Follow-up evaluations, ongoing coaching, and repeat engagements allow us to track these long-term impacts. Ultimately, success is demonstrated by the tangible business value created when the right leader is matched with the right company culture and supported for growth.

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Top Searches Making News...

Massey Henry Seeking Chief Legal Officer for Peoples Group



Toronto-based search firm **Massey Henry** was recently retained once again by Peoples Group to lead its search for a chief legal officer (CLO). Reporting to the president CEO, the chief legal officer is

a core member of the executive leadership team, responsible for developing and executing the company's legal strategy, ensuring alignment with business objectives and the organization's core values of transparency and integrity. As a trusted partner and advisor to the CEO, the CLO collaborates with the CEO and broader executive team to shape and advance the organizational vision, mission, and corporate strategy. Massey Henry is looking for a seasoned executive leader, with 20-plus years of progressive leadership experience, including seven years in senior-level positions.

Buffkin / Baker Recruits General Counsel for Shearwater Health

Partner-led executive search firm

Buffkin / Baker recently assisted in the recruitment of Matthew Thompson as general counsel and chief compliance officer of Shearwater Health in Nashville,



TN. With over 15 years of experience in corporate governance, compliance, and M&A, Mr. Thompson brings extensive expertise to support Shearwater's continued expansion. He joins Shearwater Health from Specialty Dental Brands where he worked for five years and held the general counsel and chief legal officer roles. Previously, Mr. Thompson was the assistant general counsel, corporate and securities at Delek US Holdings. In his role with Shearwater Health, Mr. Thompson will oversee all legal aspects of the company and will manage legal and compliance team members in the U.S. and Philippines.

CarterBaldwin Recruits Chief Legal Officer for Feed the Children



CarterBaldwin Executive Search has recruited Nil Loy as the first chief legal officer of Feed the Children. "Feed the Children is gaining a tremendous strategic leader in Nil Loy, and we all look forward to collaborating

to create a world where no child goes to bed hungry," said Emily Callahan, president and CEO. "Her extensive experience, combined with her passion for our mission and alignment with our values, further affirms the tremendous contributions we know she will bring to our organization." Ms. Loy joins Feed the Children from Population Services International and HealthX Partners Incorporated, where she served most recently as general counsel and corporate secretary.

...More Searches Making News

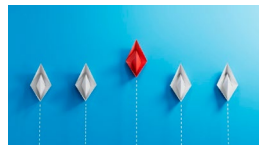
Lochlin Partners Assists the Entertainment Software Association with General Counsel Search



Lochlin Partners has assisted in the recruitment of Stan McCoy as SVP and general counsel of the Entertainment Software Association (ESA). “In an industry that depends on the protection of intellectual property to fuel future creativity and innovation, Stan’s extensive experience in government and industry is an immense asset to ESA,” said Stanley Pierre-Louis, president and CEO. “Stan will undoubtedly bolster our ability to continue to strengthen the power of the U.S. video game industry here and abroad, and we look forward to his leadership in driving key functions of the ESA.” Mr. McCoy brings to the ESA more than 25 years of experience overseeing legal and policy issues related to intellectual property, innovation and international trade.

KBRS Recruits General Counsel for Port Halifax

KBRS placed Heidi Schedler KC as general counsel and corporate secretary for Port Halifax. Ms. Schedler brings experience intersecting the public and private sectors, including as general



counsel and corporate secretary of Halifax Water. She also worked with the N.S. Department of Justice, N.S. Securities Commission and in private practice. “It is a special opportunity to join the organization I have been watching operate from office windows my entire career,” she said. “The Port is a unique and critical asset for Halifax, Nova Scotia and all of Canada and I am excited for the opportunity to work with our stakeholders to ensure a thriving and productive Port from which we can all benefit.”

LHH Knightsbridge Recruits Chief Legal Officer for LCBO

LCBO

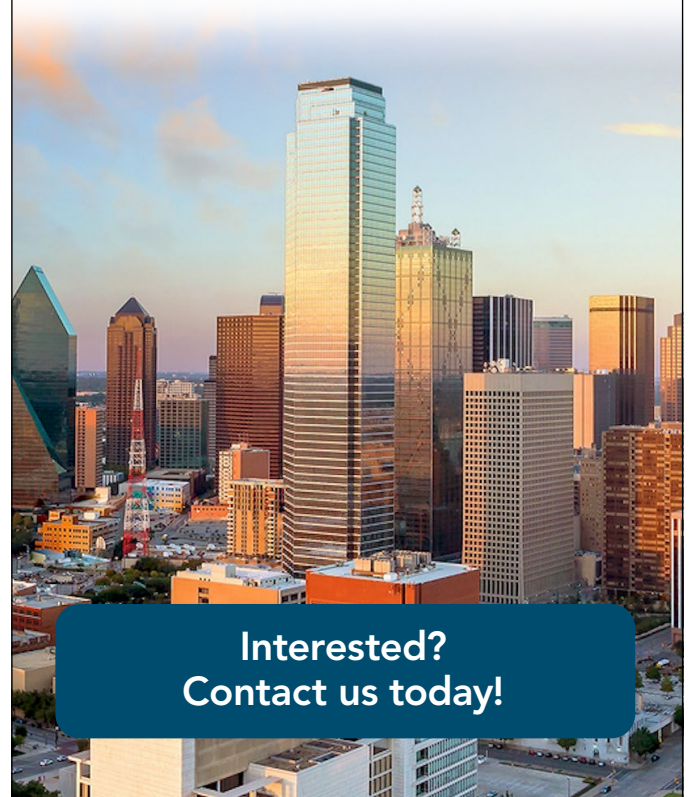
LHH Knightsbridge has assisted in the recruitment of Sacha Fraser as chief legal officer of LCBO (Liquor Control Board of Ontario). “I am pleased to announce that Sacha Fraser has joined LCBO as our new chief legal officer, overseeing our legal and procurement teams,” said George Soleas, president and CEO of the LCBO. “In addition to her background and expertise, Sacha has led teams through many complex transformations, making her a valuable addition to my leadership team as we continue our modernization journey.” Ms. Fraser brings over 25 years of progressive legal and executive leadership experience across the technology, services, and legal sectors. Most recently, she served as general counsel and corporate secretary at IBM Canada.

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