

# 9 Key Takeaways From Goodwin's Legal Operations & Corporate Counsel Roundtable

**Strategies and best practices to contain costs, maximize efficiencies and leverage innovation to collaborate across teams**

Goodwin, in conjunction with the Northeast chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC), recently hosted a Legal Operations & Corporate Counsel Roundtable to discuss how legal operations professionals and in-house counsel can contain costs and create efficiencies through a more collaborative environment. The roundtable provided insights on how to evaluate and adopt new technologies, develop strategies and best practices through fostering innovation, and stay ahead of the curve in the rapidly changing legal industry.

## 1. Providing a Resource of Instant Knowledge Through the Business of Law

While businesses seek counsel from their law firms on legal and regulatory matters, a tremendous amount of value can be derived from also asking your firms about new technologies, products, knowledge management frameworks or diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. Discussing these matters with your law firms will allow you to make informed decisions based on proven use cases while also potentially saving costs. “Our GO! Team – or Global Operations Team – is there to help,” said Mike Caplan, Goodwin’s Chief Operating Officer. “We look for ways to partner with our clients’ operational teams and build a full-service relationship. Rather than reach out to peers in the industry or third-party vendors looking to sell a product, reach out to your law firm for help on operational hurdles. The lawyers own the practice of law and our GO! Team owns the business of law.”

## 2. Managing Knowledge as a Strategic Asset

As knowledge management continues to be one of the hottest growing disciplines for all legal departments, it can be difficult to discern exactly where to start and what the framework should look like. Building out the structure of your Knowledge Management department requires consensus on what your objectives are and what assets you need to capture to further those objectives. Once you have defined your scope, objectives and knowledge assets, companies must then wade into the deep waters of emerging technologies and find products that can improve efficiencies. “Reach out to knowledge management professionals at your law firms for insights on various new technologies that help improve legal processes, such as due diligence and

transaction closings, or streamline data collection” said Anne Stemlar, Goodwin’s Managing Director of Knowledge Management and Research. “And once you have gone through these initial steps, always keep in mind that KM is a lifecycle, so you will need to continuously go through these same steps to refine and keep your KM program fresh.”

## 3. Cutting Through the Noise of Legal Tech

As the amount of investment in legal technology grows year-over-year, the practice and business of law has become more innovative yet more challenging to navigate. While it might seem natural to seek out the hottest technology, it is important to remember that your points of tension are unique to your business and may not be solved by whatever the newest product offers. “There will always be more than one solution for your unique issues, and that is where your legal partners come in — we can provide insight into available solutions or refer you to other clients we have that have experience using that technology,” said Patty Johansen, Goodwin’s Director of Knowledge Management, noting that the second component of successful technology selection is adoption. “You can pick a system and implement it, but without adoption it won’t be a success.”

## 4. Leveraging Data to Inform Decision-making

Once you have systems in place to organize, track and search data, you must find a way to unleash the intrinsic value of that information. One way to do that is by developing interactive visual dashboards for attorneys to use across departments. “It’s normal to experience decision paralysis when deciding where to start, but once you determine what business critical needs you want to meet, you will be able to take a huge step forward, for instance by putting statistics around litigation outcome

probabilities, going beyond acting on a hunch or gut instinct,” said David Hobbie, Goodwin’s Director of Knowledge Management.

## 5. Innovation Solutions Through Data Architecture

The endgame when creating a knowledge management group is to not only identify what issues need to be resolved, but to create consistency across your organization and develop a clear path to a solution. Defining an objective, creating data governance protocols, putting a framework in place — and ultimately capturing, analyzing and visualizing data — are all meant to bring clarity to your strategy and improve decision-making. “The more defined and disciplined you can be, across all departments, the better,” said Maureen Naughton, Goodwin’s Chief Innovation Officer. “For example, say you are taking data from your human resources and finance departments, are you able marry that data and use it to drive decision-making? Leaning on your law firms for help implementing or managing these systems can greatly accelerate innovation.”

## 6. Deriving Value From Massive Quantities of Data

As the need to collect and leverage data grows, so too does the pool of data that we source from. Organizations are drawing on data from internal and external platforms and, in turn, are creating a nearly endless list of sources which can be difficult to navigate for less experienced users. “Not everyone has access to IT expertise or the budget or resources to hire a consultant to put a system in place,” said David Fleming, Goodwin’s Chief Information Officer. “When you need to create dashboards and templates to streamline data visualization, lean on your law firm. Most firms are likely exploring similar business solutions, solving similar problems, and can help guide these self-service models.”

## 7. Leveraging Connections to Streamline RFPs

To enhance the RFP panel process and drive greater results, consult your firm on best practices and new technologies that can benefit the process. By partnering with outside counsel who have a wealth of experience putting together RFP responses, firms can help derive additional value from the process and help identify and address blind spots. “Our firm responds to more than 100 panel RFPs each year and can provide guidance on what does and does not work, how to increase efficiencies and how to structure panels,” said Lee Garfinkle, Goodwin’s Chief Client Development and Relationship Officer. “When there is open communication, not only does it improve the process but it strengthens the relationship with the firm.”

## 8. Reimagining the RFP Process to Grow Partnerships

As corporate legal departments and law firms make their way through RFP panel processes, they should look for ways to bolster their relationships. Clear and consistent communication from the outset allows both legal departments and their law firm service providers to have strong, productive, trusting partnerships. Taking the time to debrief on the RFP process, the expectations legal departments have of their outside counsel and the offerings of the firm is not just advisable but necessary to forge a true partnership. “We view the end of the RFP process as the beginning of the partnership,” said Lauren Piccolo-Ingram, Goodwin’s Managing Director of Client Development. “We want to make sure our clients are aware of the full spectrum of non-billable services we offer — from pricing and billing solutions to training needs — it’s important to know what your firms can offer and where they can help when new legal or business matters arise.”

## 9. Creating Meaningful Change Through Authentic, Holistic Approach to DEI

Diversity allows for more creative and innovative solutions, but we have to look beyond purely quantitative data in order to truly discern the impact of DEI efforts. Examining qualitative data enables you to more accurately assess efforts and influence the lived experience of underrepresented communities. By doing so, you can ensure that you develop initiatives that foster a sense of belonging while also furthering organizational objectives. “You must be authentic to your company’s DEI goals and your law firm partners should meet you where you are,” said Yakiry Malena Adal, Goodwin’s Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. “Your law firms can partner with you to determine initiatives, implement complementary programs that build upon one another and advise on business processes that mitigate the impact of bias and expose barriers.”

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