



General Counsel Report from FTI Consulting and Relativity Illustrates ‘Infinitely Expanding’ Role of Corporate Legal Departments in Turbulent Times

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Findings Highlight How the Unprecedented Events of 2020 Have Amplified Corporate Risk and Impacted General Counsel

WASHINGTON, Nov. 17, 2020 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- FTI Consulting, Inc. (NYSE: FCN) today announced findings from its [Technology](#) segment's second annual study of corporate legal departments, in partnership with [Relativity](#). Based on a detailed survey and one-on-one interviews by Ari Kaplan with chief legal officers at companies of all sizes, [The General Counsel Report 2021: Rising to Today's Challenges and Building Resilience for the Future](#), outlines the elevated responsibilities general counsel have taken on amid the pandemic and current social climate.

Notably, the majority of respondents indicated moderate to significant difficulties in navigating today's top challenges, including widely dispersed workforces, emerging data types, technology adoption and tackling diversity, equity and inclusion. The report shares the strategies counsel are implementing to overcome these and other issues, establish resiliency for the future and adjust to the changing demands of their role. Key findings include:

- Respondents indicated their roles have changed or intensified this year, with many taking on heavier workloads and new responsibilities, largely due to the pandemic. These include decision-making regarding company-wide COVID-19 plans, increased emphasis on risk management, more time on team support and engagement and preparation for an anticipated uptick in litigation.
- Emerging data types and AI applications are beginning to impact legal teams, particularly in the context of litigation and e-discovery, with more than half feeling less than well-prepared to manage these new challenges.
- The pandemic has forced 84 percent of general counsel to fulfill the critical role of chief health officer and/or manage employee well-being. Many of the general counsel surveyed said they are now responsible for assessing and recommending policies to balance maintaining business activities with the health and safety of their employees.
- Many respondents work with a wide range of law firms and outside legal service providers, and 84 percent said they outsource legal work because they lack the necessary in-house expertise for certain matters or technical needs.
- AI use in the legal department has increased since 2019, with 32 percent of respondents indicating they currently use AI for legal functions. Many expressed interest in exploring how to leverage AI for contract management and review needs.
- Some technology initiatives stalled in 2020. One respondent said, "My role is to modernize the law department, but the pandemic has prevented many of those initiatives."
- Perceptions about technical competence have improved, with 55 percent stating they believe lawyers have adequate knowledge of technology, compared to only 39 percent in 2019. Still, many respondents made a point to distinguish between technology proficiency in using productivity and collaboration tools versus leveraging advanced e-discovery and analytics technologies.

"General counsel have risen to meet the immense challenges that have defined 2020 and solidified their role as critical strategic leaders," said [Daryl Teshima](#), a Senior Managing Director within FTI Technology. "Last year's *General Counsel Report* revealed a marked shift in the role of the GC from the 'office of no' to an important contributor to business strategy. The events of this year have further accelerated this shift, with organizations now looking to their in-house legal teams to guide important decisions relating to pandemic response, inclusion, employee wellness, mitigating new and unexpected risks and contributing to the overall success of the business. Our goal with this study is to help counsel better understand this landscape and to facilitate insights that will help them as they take on an endless influx of complex challenges."

The study also found that corporate legal teams continue to rely heavily on outside partners to fill critical skills and resources gaps. Respondents listed a number of factors that impact how they select outside providers. Specialized expertise and quality of work stood out as the top factors, with cost, relationships and diversity also making the list of considerations.

"One of the goals of *The General Counsel Report* is to give readers insight into what may affect organizations in the future based on the experiences of chief legal officers, but predicting the turbulent times of 2020 would have been difficult, bordering on the impossible," said David Horrigan, Discovery Counsel and Legal Education Director at Relativity. "Nevertheless, the general counsel in last year's study gave us actionable insights into what would happen in 2020, including tremendous risk and the embrace of cloud technologies—and they may not have even realized how prescient and insightful their observations would be for a 2020 remotely connected world. As we look to 2021, *The General Counsel Report* provides actionable intelligence on issues ranging from the technical competence of legal teams to the latest on inclusion and diversity initiatives."

Download [The General Counsel Report 2021: Rising to Today's Challenges and Building Resilience for the Future](#).

Demographics and methodology

From August 11, 2020 through September 2, 2020, Ari Kaplan personally interviewed 31 general counsel with predominantly Fortune 1000 companies and institutions of higher education. Forty-eight percent have revenues that exceed \$1 billion, and 61 percent have over 1,000 employees. While most were in technology and telecommunications (32 percent); 13 percent were from consumer products companies; 13 percent from life sciences; 13 percent from manufacturing; 10 percent from banking, insurance or financial services organizations; 6 percent in higher education; and the remainder were from construction, energy, transportation and travel.

About FTI Consulting

FTI Consulting, Inc. is a global business advisory firm dedicated to helping organizations manage change, mitigate risk and resolve disputes: financial, legal, operational, political & regulatory, reputational and transactional. With more than 6,200 employees located in 28 countries, FTI Consulting professionals work closely with clients to anticipate, illuminate and overcome complex business challenges and make the most of opportunities. The Company generated \$2.35 billion in revenues during fiscal year 2019. For more information, visit www.fticonsulting.com and connect with us on [Twitter \(@FTIConsulting\)](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

About Relativity

At [Relativity](#), we make software to help users organize data, discover the truth, and act on it. Our platform is used by more than 13,000 organizations around the world to manage large volumes of data and quickly identify key issues during litigation, internal investigations, and compliance operations with SaaS platform RelativityOne and Relativity Trace. Relativity has users in 48+ countries from organizations, including the U.S. Department of Justice, and 199 of the Am Law 200. Relativity has been named one of Chicago's Top Workplaces by the *Chicago Tribune* for 10 consecutive years. Please contact Relativity at sales@relativity.com or visit <http://www.relativity.com> for more information.

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