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In their own words
Chief legal officers share
their leadership advice

Legal advice

When it comes to leading the legal function, technical legal expertise is **necessary but not sufficient**.

Chief legal officers (CLOs) need a host of other competencies—including authenticity, business acumen, a sense of purpose, and communication—to drive their leadership strategies and cultivate personal **resilience**.

In line with those themes, here's a roundup of key insights that current and former legal executives have shared on Deloitte's **Resilient podcast**.



Authenticity

Authenticity can make CLOs relatable and lays the groundwork for high-quality connections that boost team performance.



Debbie Majoras

Chief Legal Officer (retired), Procter & Gamble

“ We talk a lot about authenticity today, authenticity and leadership and the importance of it. But when you can show up to your team as someone who’s a true human being—who’s facing obstacles, who has faced them, yet has succeeded anyway—it tells your team we can all do the same. ”

[Full conversation here.](#)



Kermitt Brooks

Chief Legal Officer, Guardian Life

“ In my first job as a manager, I was managing attorneys who were much older than I was. I quickly learned that I couldn’t be effective if I tried to lead as though I had the same years of practice experience they did. And I couldn’t lead if I felt there was nothing I could learn from them, because that was completely untrue. ”

[Full conversation here.](#)



Tonit Calaway

General Counsel, BorgWarner

“ When it comes to developing teams and the next generation of talent, you’ve got to make room for failure. Not career-ending failure—you don’t put people in situations like that—but they’ve got to be able to make mistakes. They’ve got to understand that when you fail, you own it. And then you correct it and don’t make the same mistake again. ”

[Full conversation here.](#)

Business acumen

CLOs can elevate their role as a strategic adviser by speaking the same language and adopting the same frame of reference as those who work in the business units.



Dianne Ralston
Chief Legal Officer, SLB

“ Often, the hallmark of whether somebody will be successful, in-house or not, is realizing that some of the attributes that may have allowed you to be successful in law school or a law firm culture are often the things that will get in your way with your success in a different kind of culture. ”

Full conversation [here](#).



Vanessa Allen Sutherland
General Counsel, Phillips 66

“ You have to know the business, as well as your businesspeople. You don’t want to get a million-dollar contract that has to be done by midnight and not have any context about what the deal is and who the supplier or customers are. Make sure you learn the financial elements of your business before you give legal advice. ”

Full conversation [here](#).

A sense of purpose

A clear sense of purpose can help CLOs stay motivated and provides a North Star for making impactful decisions.



Full conversation [here](#).

Anthony Sharett

President and former Chief Legal Officer, Pathward

“ Many lawyers have options, right? I mean, we went to college, we got a law degree, many lawyers have advanced business degrees as well as diversified work experiences. And, of course, we can always hang a shingle if that’s something we want to do. So the ability to work for a mission-driven organization—not one driven only by shareholder return, although that’s important for public companies—really does make you feel good about where you’re working. ”



Full conversation [here](#).

Lanesha Minnix

Chief Legal Officer, Walgreens Boots Alliance

“ Whether it’s negotiating commercial contracts with our customers so that they get the best outcomes possible, or looking at a new product offering and making sure that we have the right intellectual property protections around it, or marketing a new offering in a compliant way, everything we do every single day is tied to the broader purpose and strategy of the business. ”



Full conversation [here](#).

Julia Simon

Partner, Lynn Pinker Hurst & Schwegmann;
former Chief Legal Officer, Mary Kay

“ As an in-house attorney, I realized that my job was to make the internal client happy. And the only way to do that is to talk to your business partners. Tell them, 'Hey, here's what we've got going on. What would be easiest for you?' Helping them make their lives easier is huge. My whole team would tell you that. ”

Communication

Effective communication helps CLOs further their goals and address differences of perception that may exist between themselves and their stakeholders.



Ivan Fong
General Counsel, Medtronic

“ When you’re a leader, you’ve lived with this idea or project or initiative, and you’re at the finish line. You must remember that most people in the organization have not even crossed the starting line. So put yourself in their shoes and communicate to them over and over again, as if they were at the starting line, which is where they are. ”

Full conversation [here](#).



Sara Hays
Independent Director and former General Counsel

“ Directors, whether they’re lawyers or not, are looking to the general counsel of their companies to be on top of any of the legal issues that the organization faces. They need to know that the issues are managed risks, that processes are in place to allow the company to manage whatever comes its way. And that the general counsel will raise any concerns the board needs to know. ”

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Additional resources for legal leaders

- Results from Deloitte's 2022 CLO and CCO strategy survey
- The importance of well-being and resilience for effective leadership
- What CLOs should know about the future of building trust in business
- Navigating the job market for in-house legal talent

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