

Challenges for Today's Health Care and Life Sciences GCs



Rear Admiral
A.B. Cruz III
BarkerGilmore



A.B. Cruz III

- Strategic Advisor & Executive Coach, BarkerGilmore
- Chairman, Naval War College Foundation
- Former Senior Vice President and Divisional General Counsel, USAA
- Former GC/CLO, The E.W. Scripps Co., Scripps Networks Interactive, and Emergent BioSolutions
- Former Navy Admiral with 33+ years of military leadership experience
- Senior executive and board experience across financial services, biotech/pharma, telecommunications, media and entertainment, oil and gas, education, and the military.



BarkerGilmore Overview

- Founded in 2006
- Executive search, coaching, and leadership development firm focused on in-house legal and compliance teams
- Combines seasoned executive search consultants with highly respected former GCs/CLOs/CCOs
- Supports recruitment, long-term performance, and the success of legal and compliance leaders
- Learn more: www.barkergilmore.com

GC AdvantageSM

- Complimentary professional development program for corporate legal and compliance leaders
- Offers upcoming and on-demand webinars focused on legal and compliance leadership
- Designed to support practical growth, effectiveness, and leadership development for in-house teams
- Visit: www.barkergilmore.com/webinar/

Challenges for Today's Health Care and Life Sciences GCs

This interactive discussion will focus on the practical leadership challenges facing GCs in managing and evolving their legal departments. Today, the topics to be explored are:

- 1) strategies for effectively managing outside counsel relationships and controlling legal spend;
- 2) how technology and AI are reshaping the way in-house teams and outside firms deliver legal services;
- 3) approaches to attracting, developing, and retaining high-performing legal talent, including succession planning for key leadership roles; and
- 4) personal leadership and effectiveness challenges facing GCs as they balance increasing operational, strategic, and advisory responsibilities within their organizations

Today's Gameplan

1

All-GC Session

- a. Outside Counsel & Legal Spend
- b. AI's Impact on Legal Services
- c. Talent Management & Succession Planning
- d. Effective Leadership as GCs

2

Breakout Group Discussions

3

Reconvene – Group Reports

4

Wrap Up

OUTSIDE COUNSEL & LEGAL SPEND

Top Issues

- Maximizing value of the services performed/provided by outside counsel, while maintaining budget/cost discipline.
- Defining value beyond simply “legal work at an hourly rate.”
- Setting clear expectations in terms of business objectives, “success,” staffing, budgets, communication, and accountability.
- Balancing cost discipline with access to specialized expertise in high-risk matters.

OUTSIDE COUNSEL & LEGAL SPEND

Key Takeaways

- Maintain robust by-matter competition amongst the company's candidate or preferred outside counsel
- Selection predicated on firm's alignment with specific business goals & objectives, performance expectations, cost considerations.
- Establish and enforce outside counsel guidelines, which establishes upfront expectations re budget, staffing, reporting, decision points, etc.
- Impose specific management responsibilities on a law firm's designated relationship partner and hold accountable.
- Use data, preferred provider models, and alternative fee arrangements.
- Conduct regular or post-matter law firm performance reviews.

AI'S IMPACT ON LEGAL SERVICES

Top Issues

- Should AI be viewed/treated as a threat...or embraced/adopted as an opportunity?
- Determining where AI can drive meaningful efficiency without compromising work product, professional judgment, or risk management.
- Establishing governance, protocols, guardrails, and accountability for AI use by in-house legal teams and outside counsel.
- Preparing/training lawyers to properly and advantageously use, manage, and oversee AI and similar tech tools without losing focus on business partnership and legal judgment.

AI'S IMPACT ON LEGAL SERVICES

Key Takeaways

- AI is already reshaping the provision of legal services and optimizing workflows, e.g., research, doc review, and drafting
- Junior and even mid-level attorneys must adapt by developing higher-value skills, e.g., critical thinking, strategic judgment, and technological fluency.
- AI is also redefining the GC role; promoting the introduction of innovation, tech advances, and transformational frameworks, while still actively practicing tried-and-true leadership qualities, e.g., good judgment and prudent oversight.
- Embrace AI/technology tools responsibly; treat not merely as operational tools, but as a leadership/management responsibilities, requiring testing, clear-use cases, guardrails, and escalation paths before broad deployment.

TALENT MANAGEMENT & SUCCESSION PLANNING

Top Issues

- Attracting, developing, and retaining top talent remains a top priority and yet a constant challenge for GCs.
- Many factors impacting talent management are beyond the control of the GC, yet GCs remain responsible for assembling and maintaining a capable legal team/function.
- Most GC and other high-level legal hires continue to be sourced externally, signaling lacking or impeded succession pipelines
- Many organizations' succession-planning processes fall short in formality, sophistication, intentionality, and accountability.

TALENT MANAGEMENT & SUCCESSION PLANNING

Key Takeaways

- The success of talent management programs starts with strong and committed leadership, not a written company policy or program.
- Even where a company's talent management program or succession planning process are lacking, top GCs can still effectively attract, motivate, and nurture their people and teams.
- Retention depends on growth, trust, sponsorship, and a credible path forward.
- Succession planning is a core leadership responsibility and critical to good governance and business continuity.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AS GCs

Top Issues

- The GC role is unique in that it is often multi-dimensional and situationally driven.
- The GC role continues to evolve and grow w/ expanding responsibilities and new challenges, complexities, and demands at both the strategic and operational levels.
- In most every situation, good GCs are placed (or place themselves) at the “tip of the spear” to help address challenging issues and “advance the ball.”
- Many GCs, particularly new ones, have had little if any formal leadership training or exercised true cross-functional leadership.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AS GCs

Key Takeaways

- Being a capable manager isn't enough; today's GC must be an effective cross-functional leader of both people and processes to help advance their organization.
- A GC's skillset needs to adapt, evolve & grow as their job and responsibilities dictate.
- Continued leadership development should be a key and constant objective in a GC's professional development plan.
- With respected “command presence,” a GC can more effectively lead and better serve as the conscience of the company, the voice of reason, the standard bearer & enforcer.

Breakout GC Sessions (20 mins)

- Each group will focus on one of the four main challenges:
 - Group 1: Outside Counsel & Legal Spend
 - Group 2: AI's Impact on Legal Services
 - Group 3: Talent Management & Succession Planning
 - Group 4: Effective Leadership as GCs
- Be ready to present key insights and actionable takeaways to the entire group.

Upcoming BarkerGilmore Webinars



The GC-Board Alignment Gap: What Boards and General Counsel Say—and What Actually Happens

Jun 24, 2026 @ 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm EDT



Inside the 2026 In-House Counsel Compensation Report: Trends, Gaps, and Implications for Legal Talent

May 12, 2026 @ 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm EDT

Connect with Me

A.B. Cruz III

Principal

ABC3 Advisory Group

abcruz3@msn.com

(513) 702-5234

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/abcruziii](https://www.linkedin.com/in/abcruziii)

