

General Counsel Navigator Tool for Busy Generalists

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If your legal department only had 15 minutes to answer a question on privacy, corporate governance, or intellectual property, what kind of information would you want at your fingertips? That's the driving concept behind new software for in-house counsel being released Wednesday by Wolters Kluwer Law & Business.

General Counsel Navigator draws on input from 150 in-house attorneys, according to lead developer Tina Ayotte Welu. The tool was built for legal departments with up to 10 attorneys — a group of generalists who don't have a lot of extra time, she says.

"They're just constantly bombarded with questions from so many different areas," says Ayotte Welu, adding: "I spoke with so many counsel who said, If I have to spend more than 15 minutes, I have to call outside counsel — and that means money."

So even the interface was designed with time saving in mind. The in-house counsel who helped develop GC Navigator said they wanted an interface that was intuitive and didn't require tons of training, according to Ayotte Welu.

"Everything you see on the screen has been vetted, arranged, and designed by corporate counsel," she says.

On a home screen divided into four columns, users will find a list of subject matter topics, including "Computer and Internet Law," "Intellectual Property," and "Securities." In-house attorneys can also tailor the list to match the areas they're responsible for. "Depending upon what areas you work on, you can customize the home page so you only see what you do," says Ayotte Welu.

Users will also have ready access to research tools like multistate surveys. It's a component that allows in-house counsel to execute a side-by-side comparison of state laws on a given topic.

In-house counsel told Wolters Kluwer, for example, that they often field questions from their company's marketing department regarding the legality of giving away prizes at trade shows. A GC Navigator search shows that while Pennsylvania has "no specific sweepstakes, contests, and prizes law," both California and New York do have provisions in this area. Users can then click on a link to the specific citations.

"When it comes to doing that kind of research, they believe it will take them too much time on their own, and that is something they would send to outside counsel," Ayotte Welu explains. But with the survey tool, "they have their summary right there that tells them what they need to do."

Checklists are another prominent feature of the software. Here, in-house counsel can look up how to best prepare a new director on the board or what to include in an employment agreement.

In-house attorneys also told Wolters they want to be able to collaborate and share information easily. "You can create research folders on the system and actually share them with your colleagues in the department, or with whomever else you'd like," Ayotte Welu explains. Users can also save their search results as a document or send them as an email.

For more information on General Counsel Navigator, visit wolterskluwerlb.com/gcn.