

ACC Embarks on New Strategic Plan, Building Upon A Rich History of Success

Shortly after Veta T. Richardson was named the incoming president & CEO of ACC, she was tasked with the development of ACC's new strategic plan. This leadership transition was the opportune time to conduct a comprehensive review of the organization, assess member needs, identify gaps and set the path forward for ACC's continued success. Over the course of more than six months, ACC board members, senior staff, volunteer leaders and members from around the world provided input into the strategic planning process.

For almost three decades, ACC has served the professional and business interests of lawyers who practice in the legal departments of corporations, associations and other private-sector organizations around the globe. With almost 30,000 members employed by over 10,000 organizations in more than 75 countries, ACC is the world's largest network of in-house counsel. ACC serves its members by connecting them to one another, and to the information and resources necessary to support their professional growth.

ACC's market-leading position and high levels of member satisfaction have set the stage for exciting opportunities to evolve the organization. However, ACC's new strategic plan does not represent a radical change in direction or focus. Rather, it clarifies and expands upon how ACC will build upon its strong foundation to advance its mission over the next five years.

Membership Engagement and Key Findings

This strategic planning process incorporated unprecedented levels of member feedback, thereby providing a clear understanding of the value drivers that underlie the decision to join and remain a member of ACC.

ACC owes a debt of gratitude to the 4,130 members who completed an online strategic plan survey, the 55 members who participated in focus groups held at the 2011 Annual Meeting, and the 16 members from six different countries who were kind enough to be interviewed for their thoughts on ACC's mission, vision and past strategies. Respondents included board, chapter and committee leadership, as well as a broad spectrum of members — from CLOs to new to in-house members — from small and large departments worldwide.

The following ten key findings represent the most important factors gleaned through the process and they lay the foundation for this strategic plan.

1. Members are supportive of ACC's current mission and vision, and are highly likely to recommend ACC.

Both member survey responses and key stakeholder interview input validated that ACC's basic mission and vision statements are appropriate because they are aligned with member needs. In fact, member survey respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they believe ACC is currently fulfilling each element of its vision. All elements of the vision were rated highly, indicating ACC has been successful in meeting member needs.

Members are also highly likely to recommend ACC to their colleagues and friends, indicating that ACC enjoys a high measure of customer loyalty. This likelihood was even greater among members who serve (or have served) in leadership positions, either at the committee, chapter or ACC board of directors level.

2. ACC's mission attainment principally relies upon three value drivers: prominent market leadership, member satisfaction and retention, and organizational stability.

During the strategic planning process, the critical capabilities that support ACC's ability to attain its mission were identified and mapped into a "value tree." The value tree is a visual representation of how ACC creates value and is a collection of capabilities, activities, programs and services required for ACC to be successful. These key success factors were identified as prominence in the legal marketplace, high levels of membership satisfaction and renewals, and the financial and organizational stability of the association.

3. ACC is effectively meeting member needs in all key areas, and is most effective in those areas that are most important to members.

Select value drivers from the above-discussed value tree formed the basis for an online survey to collect feedback from all ACC members. Members were asked to assess the **importance** and **effectiveness** of eight value drivers, or the key areas that significantly influence their decision to join and remain a member of ACC:

1. Exchanging best practices and practical resources
2. Educational/professional development
3. Thought leadership
4. Access to networking opportunities
5. Member engagement and visibility
6. Brand value
7. Advocacy efforts
8. Sharing information and creating synergies

All effectiveness ratings for each of the eight factors were very positive, thereby demonstrating a high level of member satisfaction.

4. Members' perceptions of ACC's effectiveness in each of the eight key areas are aligned with their perceptions of its relative importance.

The results of the online member survey also led to the ability to analyze how members' perceptions of ACC's effectiveness align with their perceptions of the importance of the area being examined. ACC members indicated importance and effectiveness were almost perfectly aligned, reflecting an accurate understanding of member needs and preferences. The analysis of the member survey results did not identify significant gaps (i.e., instances where importance significantly outpaced effectiveness). Overall, the survey results indicated that there was substantial alignment among ACC's effectiveness relative to the level of importance of the key capability, activity, program or service.

5. ACC board members and general members agree that ACC is effective, but their perspectives differed regarding the relative importance of thought leadership, advocacy, and sharing information and creating synergies.

ACC board members rate ACC's effectiveness more highly than does the general member population, especially for the following three value drivers – Thought Leadership, Advocacy Efforts and Sharing Information & Creating Synergies. In addition, board members also differed from general members in their importance rankings. Board members place greater importance on Thought Leadership and Advocacy and less importance on Sharing Information & Creating Synergies.

6. Education and professional development are highly valued by members.

Education and professional development continue to be highly valued by our members. "Opportunities for educational and professional development" was ranked as the most important value driver to members, with 33 percent of the survey participants rating this as the top reason why they join and remain members of ACC. Key stakeholders interviewed during this process also noted that education is highly valued, and that for most members in the United States, all or almost all of their Continuing Legal Education (CLE) requirements are met through their participation in ACC events. Similarly, member focus group participants consistently supported strategic initiatives related to education and professional development.

7. Member diversity suggests that ACC cannot be “all things to all members.”

ACC members are extremely diverse — by position, experience level, department size, industry and geography. This creates inherent challenges in the ability to address the needs and interests of all ACC members and constituencies. Stakeholder interviews and focus groups indicate the realization that ACC’s success will require prioritizing some needs over others and accepting that in some cases, certain member needs and desires may go unaddressed.

8. Members believe that it is important for ACC to build and develop a strong global presence and international network of in-house counsel.

Member survey participants were asked to rate the extent to which it is important for ACC to build and develop a strong global presence and international network of in-house counsel. 81 percent of members responded that these matters are important to a moderate, great or very great extent. In fact, 45 percent of members strongly support developing a global presence whereas only 19 percent responded that they are not supportive, or supportive only to a small extent.

9. Members recognize the potential of social media, but do not believe ACC should evolve its platform at this time.

During the interviews, key stakeholders were asked to share their perspectives regarding social media and its potential as a growth opportunity for ACC. Almost every key stakeholder described social media as an area they believed to be important to other (likely younger) members. Many indicated they were not experienced users and did not personally see a need for social media offerings beyond what ACC offers today.

10. CLOs of large law departments can significantly impact ACC’s success and are interested in offerings that better meet their needs.

ACC currently provides significant resources to small law departments through committees, chapters, and other resources and services. These members play a critical role to ACC and to the profession.

In an effort to serve the full in-house community, it is critical that ACC also make large law CLOs more aware of the value of ACC. Key stakeholders and large law CLO focus group participants highlighted the need to more effectively serve this segment, especially as the group is at a greater risk of joining other associations that compete with ACC for this sector of the in-house community. Given their ability to sign up multiple members at once and positively add to ACC’s visibility and stature by virtue of their prominence, engaging CLOs of large law departments will contribute to ACC’s growth.

Strategic Themes and Approaches

The cornerstones of ACC's new Strategic Plan are three simple, powerful themes that will guide decision-making and be consistently reinforced with ACC's key constituents. These strategic themes (see appendix) describe what ACC will do over the next five years to advance its mission and vision, as well as the specific approaches for pursuing these themes.

THEME 1: Combine and focus resources to streamline the exchange of information.

- Create and provide easy access to relevant, high-quality, and timely resources and information.
- Create opportunities for chapters and committees to share resources and best practices to more efficiently serve members' needs.

THEME 2: Optimize services and experiences to retain and engage members.

- Create meaningful connections between members that contribute to their professional success.
- Identify and pursue strategic alliances to deliver services to members and represent their interests.
- Strengthen the position and capabilities of in-house counsel as business professionals.

THEME 3: Position ACC for continued relevance and impact.

- Develop targeted offerings to increase Large Law CLO participation and engagement.
- Evolve internationally to maintain ACC market leadership.
- Understand, monitor and act upon the needs of the next generation of in-house counsel.
- Be the voice of the in-house bar.

Revision of ACC's Mission and Vision to Reflect Globalization Strategy

More than a decade ago, ACC's leadership decided to pursue becoming a global association and several steps were taken in furtherance of that goal. The association changed its name, chartered four new chapters outside the United States and expanded its membership base to encompass more than 75 nations — representing approximately 13 percent of all members.

In recognition of these advancements and the value members place on globalization, the ACC Board unanimously approved amending ACC's mission and vision to reflect the strategy to build and develop a strong international network and global presence.

Mission

ACC is a global bar association that promotes the common professional and business interests of in-house counsel who work for corporations, associations, and other private-sector organizations through information, education, networking opportunities and advocacy initiatives.

Vision

ACC aims to be the premier global bar association serving the diversified needs of in-house counsel by:

- *Anticipating and understanding the needs of the in-house bar*
- *Helping members deliver services to their corporate clients efficiently and promote the value of in-house services*
- *Influencing the practice of law as it affects the in-house bar*
- *Delivering a mix of relevant, timely services, including information, education, networking and advocacy*

APPENDIX

