

Member Spotlight

John Bates

General Counsel and Chief Information Security Officer

Clarity Insights

Chicago, IL

Current position since: 2014

Years in-house: 14

Law School: Chicago-Kent College of Law

Undergrad: University of Illinois, BA in Philosophy

Best thing about my current job:

Being involved with Big Data and data scientists in an emerging IT field. I am also our Chief Information Security Office (CISO) and enjoy the data security aspects and continual learning that relates to this portion of my job. This is a fast moving area and I have to continually work with my IT security engineers, various software manufacturers, and other security colleagues to make sure we are addressing risks within short time periods. I also have to work with our executives and liaison with them about data security vulnerabilities or developments that have to be addressed. I often have to translate between different groups and even though this is a challenge, it is also very rewarding and fun.

Most challenging thing about my current job:

Supporting a decentralized environment across multiple time zones. With most of my colleagues working onsite at client facilities, it is a challenge to have face-to-face communication.

My most pivotal career move:

A shift from trial attorney to a technology and in-house career. I worked for several years in criminal defense and at a certain point I needed a mental and emotional break. I moved to financial services and began working with technology. As with anything, if you have a passion around a certain subject area then you can figure out how to parlay your current experience into the transition. I have had to do this several times in my career and it has taught me that every position has added experience and knowledge that will be useful in my next transition. Even though I have been in technology for many years, I am already incorporating IT data security into my passion and will likely

incorporate that into future positions. With technology in particular, if you aren't keeping up with the changes upon changes, then you may be left behind. I have to be able to understand the marketplace in order to effectively communicate with my internal clients.

Hardest lesson I've learned as a lawyer:

I think that as attorneys we are direct in our communication. I think we have to continually be very mindful and often soften our approach so our internal clients do not feel as if we are criticizing them.

Advice I would give to new lawyers, in-house or otherwise:

Aside from treating people well, I would say that you have to understand the business. You need to fully understand the business drivers in order to express risks that will resonate with your internal clients. You might have a valid perspective, but if they don't respect you and believe that you understand the business then they will not hear you.

Most valuable life lesson that I still apply today is...

When I began my career, my partner told me that we work in a small environment and we need to advocate but always be honest and trustworthy. There is a professional way in which we deal with anyone within our work life and you never know when poor behavior may come back to hurt you when you need their help. He would often say that you catch more bees with honey.

How I achieve work/life balance:

I'm not sure I have figured this out, but there are times where I just take time off and stay away from all the electronic devices.

Best thing about ACC membership is...

The ACC is an amazing organization that has so many experts who are incredibly willing to share and help each other. It's a community that really supports its members. The ACC has allowed me to interact with in-house attorneys throughout the world. I now have personal friendships with so many of them. The ACC community is dynamic and can have a significant impact on your professional career and also your personal life. I've developed so many relationships at the local and national level that I feel I can pick up the phone and have a conversation and obtain great advice and guidance on any topic.

My favorite pro bono or volunteer activities are:

I enjoy working with Street Law each year. It's a great opportunity to create hope and opportunity with students in our community. The commitment is relatively small and yet it has a large impact on the students. In addition to helping the students, I enjoy spending time with the rest of the Street Law volunteers as that is also another community. I also have volunteered with the national ACC on several committees. I am currently finishing up my final year as Chair of the Intellectual Property Committee and I work closely with the IT, Privacy, and eCommerce Committee as a liaison between the two committees. These are also great communities of in-house colleagues and friends. I have developed so many relationships throughout the US where the ACC has been the foundation of those friendships.

When I am not working, I like to...

Scuba dive, read, bonsai, concerts, collect music, travel.

If I were not practicing law, I would probably be...

a Computer Science engineer and writing code.

What is currently on your music playlist:

Radiohead, Lorde, Jeff Tweedy, Prince, Alicia Keys, Springsteen, D'Angelo, Depeche Mode, Elliot Smith, Gary Clark Jr., Gorillaz, London Grammar, Slowdive, U2.

The place I've never been but would most like to visit:

I have been meaning to get to India for several years but still haven't found the time. I am fascinated with the history, culture, religion, etc. I would love to have this experience sometime soon.