

Heidi Stover

Senior Counsel, Technology & Product

KONE Inc.

In current position for: Approx. 3 years

Years in-house: 16 years

Law School: Southern Illinois University School of Law

Undergrad: Millikin University (B.A. Political Science, minor in Spanish)

An overview of my role is:

I work hybrid/remote, serving geographically disbursed business partners. My territory is US-Canada-Mexico, but I frequently collaborate with colleagues in Finland, where we are headquartered. Substantively, on the product side, I have a seat at the table for development and improvement efforts, as well as for tackling issues around product safety and regulatory code compliance. I engage with cross-functional teams implementing changes for the business concerning technology and data governance. I am the privacy counsel for North America, interacting with our global privacy and cybersecurity functions. Aside from a decent chunk of “other,” I also represent the company on a committee for the elevator and escalator industry’s trade association, NEII. Pretty soon after I joined, I was asked to lead the Team Building Team for the law department, and that opportunity has allowed me to get to know people with whom I otherwise wouldn’t interface.

I wanted to work in-house because:

At the time, the opportunity was right, and I was ready for a change after being at the firm for nearly 10 years. I recall having some trepidation over what exactly I would do as an in-house counsel. At the firm, I had autonomy in handling matters and making decisions, and I found that I could translate that approach to how I work with my business partners in a company setting.

The best thing about my current job is:

The issues I deal with are interesting, since I get to work on the digitalization and future-proofing of our equipment, but more important, the company has a family culture.

The most challenging thing about my current job is:

The company is much larger than those I've been with previously. Effecting change and resolving issues are challenging because of the processes involved. It's easier to make improvements and "just do it" in a smaller environment because there are fewer stakeholders and closer communication.

Brief description of past legal jobs:

I come from an in-house generalist background, handling the usual variety of substantive areas including commercial and insured litigation; contract negotiation and management; safety and environmental incident response and mitigation; privacy; compliance; risk management; logistics; quality; intellectual property protection; joint development partnerships; business entity and corporate governance; records retention; and law department operations. The first company I worked for processed corn to make starches and sweeteners used in food, paper products, and ethanol. Before joining a company, I worked at a small law firm in Central Illinois, which focused on litigation for the defense, business law, and trust & estate work. I also handled agricultural law matters.

I achieve work/life balance by:

I exercise every day in the morning. When my schedule allows, around noon, I'll take a walk or do a You Tube yoga session with Ali Kamenova. KONE encourages the use of PTO and provides a generous number of days off, so that helps, too. And, of course, remote working doesn't require a commute.

Advice I would give to new in-house lawyers:

Each company is different. Learn what matters for yours and get on the same page. Since each industry presents unique risks, your in-house legal work can vary greatly depending on a company's activities and where it does business. Recognize that incoming business partners may have preferences or expectations for the role legal plays based on their experiences at other companies, so listen and be flexible. Be prepared to answer challenges if your advice restricts what the business wants to do. Be practical yourself and use external counsel who are also practical.

What I like most about ACC's Chicago Chapter:

The social events. I need to make a point to attend more of these.

Most valuable life lesson that I still apply:

Less is more. True for just about everything – perfume, criticisms, pages in a contract, hours a regulator is on-site, but this does not apply to wine.

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

A mega-millions lottery winner.

My favorite movie is:

Blues Brothers since I grew up in Joliet.

I'm currently binge watching:

This Fool on Hulu: Wacky humor and endearing characters. Snowflake Mountain on Netflix: A story of personal growth, teamwork, and meeting challenges.

My favorite book:

One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez