

**UPCOMING MEMBER EVENTS**

- 6/9/23**  
PBPA Rapid Remedy  
*PBPA and Seyfarth Shaw*  
Rapid Remedy (on employment issues)
- 6/13/23**  
Monthly Luncheon  
*Polsinelli*  
Maggiano's
- 7/11/23**  
Monthly Luncheon  
*Robbins, Alloy, Belinfante & Littlefield LLC*  
Maggiano's
- 8/8/23**  
Monthly Luncheon  
*Womble Bond Dickinson (US) LLP*  
Maggiano's
- 8/16/23**  
ACC/PBPA CLE Challenge  
(formerly known as the Value Challenge)  
*Bondurant, Mixson & Elmore*  
*JS | Held*  
*Morris Manning & Martin*  
*Parker Hudson*  
*Taylor English*
- 8/23/23**  
CLE/Networking  
*Nelson Mullins*  
Annual Braves Event  
Truist Park
- 8/24/23**  
Leadership Series Event  
Home Depot

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**'ALMOST LAST': TIMING SPARKS URGENCY  
FOR KEY INITIATIVES**



*Kathryn Hutton*  
ACC Georgia President

As I sit down to write my penultimate President's Message, I keep focusing on the word, "penultimate," which derives from the Latin roots paene ("almost") and ultimus ("last").

"Almost last" suits me well right now. I feel an underlying current of urgency to accomplish the remaining parts of my agenda that I set out when I became president of our chapter at the beginning of 2022:

- Rebranding to adapt to the evolved work environment.
- Diversifying the content and delivery of ACC Georgia programs.
- Saying, "Yes!" to new experiences and opportunities.

And we have (almost) done it!

As we came out of the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic (through which my predecessor, Melloney Douce, masterfully guided ACC Georgia), we kick-started ACC Georgia's favorite activities, implemented new initiatives and created opportunities for our members to network and take ownership of their career trajectories.

We are back at Maggiano's for our monthly CLE luncheons and, with the support of our sponsors, we have hosted Deep Dive luncheon CLEs, in-person Women's Initiative events (book club, hiking, yoga and golf events), the CLE and Braves game at Truist Park, happy hours, holiday parties and more!

In April, the board approved hiring Geoff Frost as a consultant to galvanize our program development and sponsor recruitment (see Geoff's introduction on page 4).

When this newsletter comes out in June, ACC Georgia's summer intern program will be starting. These internships are great opportunities for law students to work with in-house legal departments. Over the years, we've seen some of these relationships evolve into permanent positions. In one case, the host company asked the summer intern to continue working through the school year and, upon her graduation, partnered with her to design a job specifically for her. What a wonderful example of an attorney taking agency over her career!

It's still early to predict the long-term effects of recent events, but perhaps the tectonic cultural and political changes have fostered the growth of a power dynamic that allows employers and employees to rebrand themselves, openly foster diversity and create a culture of saying, "Yes and ...," which in-house counsel will recognize as a critical strategy to avoid being seen as the "Department of No."

Almost done, but not quite: I have a few more things I want to accomplish!

- New member calls: We recently launched a new initiative to host regular calls to acquaint new members with ACC Georgia and our myriad activities.
- Mentoring program: You should have recently seen a survey request for input on ACC Georgia's mentoring program. We are excited about the relaunch of this program. Participants will be notified of their mentor/mentee by mid-June, and we are planning for a summer in-person kickoff event.

**Kathryn Hutton**  
ACC Georgia President

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

### Anne Kamosso

Senior Regulatory Counsel, Ohmium International Inc.



#### Q. How did you get involved in ACC Georgia?

I moved my family from Northern Virginia to Georgia in 2018, so after practicing in and around Washington, D.C. for 15 years, I needed a whole new network. I was active in the National Capital Region chapter, but I've found the Georgia chapter to be very welcoming. Maybe it's a Deep South thing. Through my involvement in the Georgia chapter, I've made some very good friends among members and sponsors.

#### Q. Tell us about your roles on the ACC Georgia board.

I joined the board in 2020 and have served as Member at Large, VP of Special Programs and VP of Member Outreach. In January of this year, I started a term as Treasurer, which I've enjoyed. Then the President-Elect role opened in April. I jumped at it because I've enjoyed my board service so much and I want to be an even bigger part of ensuring we have great programming and social activities. I'm grateful to the current president, Kathryn Hutton, for all of her support and to the rest of the board for electing me.

#### Q. What is your responsibility for managing crisis?

I'm Senior Regulatory Counsel, so my job is to learn the law, know the law and put in place processes to prevent crises.

#### Q. How did you grow up, and why did you want to go to law school and become an attorney?

I'm originally from Liberty Center, a town of just over 1,000 in northwestern Ohio. I moved to Washington, D.C. after I graduated from college because my sister lived in a Maryland suburb, and that made it seem safe. I went to law school because I spent two years as a legal assistant at a big D.C. firm and I wanted to be just like the attorneys I worked with there. They seemed so smart and sophisticated to the rural person I was back then.

#### Q. What attracted you to the type of law you practice?

I like in-house work because I like being integrated with businesspeople. I love strategy sessions. As a firm associate, I never got access to strategy, and it's thrilling. One of my favorite bosses since I've been in-house corrected me when I said I wasn't a businessperson but just a lawyer. I love her for that. I felt like my contributions, even those that weren't legal, were valued.

#### Q. How did you go about building your personal brand?

I didn't think about a personal brand until I moved to Georgia and had to reinvent myself. Now, I recognize that my brand is about getting things done. I'm not afraid to roll up my sleeves and build a compliance system in a new area of law. To me, there's nothing worse than analysis paralysis.

#### Q. What do you like about working at Ohmium International Inc.?

Green hydrogen is an exciting space to be in with a lot of momentum and my day-to-day is one new challenge after another. One day I'm drafting a handbook for Indian employees and discussing international trade concepts, and the next day I'm training employees on confidential information protection and creating a new European affiliate.

#### Q. What makes a successful leader?

A successful leader brings others along. They cultivate their successors and they encourage others in their organization to be their best selves.

#### Q. What is your best advice for outside lawyers?

This one is so important: Be responsive. I've had to drop so many firms whose lawyers wait several days to respond to an email or don't respond at all. You'll get my business only if you make me feel like a priority.

#### Q. What are you most proud of?

I'm proudest of my professional growth over the last several years. I felt imposter syndrome to my core for many years, and I've gotten past that. I've flourished in-house in three very different industries and there isn't anything I can't do.

#### Q. Who is a mentor or a personal hero?

All of my heroes are women I've worked with in the past who've excelled in their careers. Janet Nesse and Adrienne Clair, who are partners at law firms, showed me that smart is cool. Diana Steinhoff, President & CEO of an insurance company, showed me how to work with a no-fear attitude.

#### Q. What keeps you busy outside of work?

I'm a serial club-joiner, so I'm trying to rejuvenate the Oberlin College Atlanta-area alumni club. I also spend a lot of time watching soccer matches. My husband coaches three teams and my daughter plays for the same club.

#### Q. What is a book you read recently?

I don't get time to myself to read very often, but *The Fearless Organization* has really stuck with me. I've had the misfortune to experience workplaces where individual contributors were afraid of managers' reactions so they buried bad news and simply hoped it would never come to light. The book gives concrete examples of how that type of environment can cause catastrophes, so managers need to make workplaces safe places for honest conversations and for quick failures.

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### WOMEN'S INITIATIVE

#### Catalyst Level

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Fisher & Phillips LLP  
Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart PC

#### Thought Leader Level

SimpleLegal

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

### Vanessa Suh Watson

Senior Counsel, Georgia Power Co.



#### **Q. How did you get involved in ACC Georgia, and have you made any professional connections through it?**

Our parent company, Southern Co., has a corporate membership they offer to the attorneys, so I've been involved since I joined Georgia Power in 2018. I've definitely made professional connections through ACC Georgia. At the last luncheon, I happened to be sitting next to the general counsel of a fellow electric company, which was great because our companies have a relationship. We'd never met and this was an organic way to form a connection.

#### **Q. How did you grow up and why did you want to go to law school and become an attorney?**

I was born and spent most of my childhood in Korea before my family moved to Florida when I was in middle school. I got hooked on "Law & Order: SVU" and had total admiration for the lead prosecutor on the show. I wanted to be that person, the hero. During law school, I applied for an internship at the Clayton County District Attorney's office and was lucky enough to work for some very smart and passionate prosecutors. I quickly realized I didn't love facing off with defendants in court, which eventually led me to become a transactional attorney. I am still in awe of what prosecutors do on a daily basis.

#### **Q. How did you come to work in-house at Georgia Power?**

I was practicing commercial real estate at a great firm and happened to see an opening at Georgia Power for a real estate attorney. I was intrigued as I did not know Georgia Power had real estate issues. Now I am one of two real estate senior counsels. We manage all real property issues across the state, which can include power plants and surrounding property, transmission and distribution rights-of-way, hydropower facilities and general property matters.

#### **Q. What do you like about working at Georgia Power?**

First, we're doing something important by creating electricity and protecting the power grid. Also, most companies are profit focused, but as a regulated utility we are naturally community focused. I like that we always try to do the right thing. Finally, no two days are truly the same — even in real estate, which one would think gets kind of routine. But because we're vertically integrated, from generation to distribution, that results in a lot of different problems for us to solve.

#### **Q. What is your biggest legal challenge?**

We're regulated by the Georgia Public Service Commission and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, so making sure we're in compliance with all the different regulatory and statutory schemes is an overarching and ever-present concern.

#### **Q. What makes a successful leader?**

Thinking about what I've liked about our CEOs, a successful leader inspires trust and confidence. I think the best leaders don't think they are too important for the details. They are interested in knowing what it's like in the trenches and want to understand where problems originate.

#### **Q. Have you participated in any unique legal or management initiatives?**

Within Georgia Power, we have an organization that implements focus projects. I was one of the first people picked for what they call a "microbattle," in which you're taken off your current job for a few months to work exclusively on that project. It was also related to an area of law that I support — working with municipalities across the state.

#### **Q. What's your best advice for somebody who's an outside counsel?**

One thing I would like to suggest is that it's not a bother to check in or ping the in-house counsel to ask, "What's going on?" or "Can I help you with something?" or "This thing/law came up that might interest you." It is almost guaranteed the in-house counsel has something to talk about and just needed a prompt.

#### **Q. Do you have any favorite words of wisdom?**

My husband's granny used to have a sign in her yard that said, "Whistle while you weed." I liked it so much I had a duplicate made for our house, and it reminds me to be happy to be working.

#### **Q. Do you have a mentor?**

My previous manager, who is now the deputy general counsel. It took me a while to understand the value an in-house lawyer can bring to a company. She's made me a better lawyer.

#### **Q. What keeps you busy outside of work?**

My 11-month-old daughter Grace and wishing I could still play golf and hike with my husband, but I'm sure those days will come back.

#### **Q. What would you be if you weren't a lawyer?**

I'd like to work in foreign service, working on cases like the Wall Street Journal reporter being held in Russia.

## WELCOME THE NEWEST MEMBERS OF ACC GEORGIA!

Gabriella Bell — Cox Enterprises Inc.  
Raechel Bimmerle — Airbus Americas  
David Black — Sisecam Chemicals Resources LLC  
Janene Browder — Primerica Inc.  
William Brown — USAA  
Gordon Brown — Delta Air Lines  
Kathleen Campbell — The Home Depot Inc.  
Lawrence Cooper — TK Elevator Corp.  
John Coughlin — TowerPoint Capital LLC  
Sean Cox — North Highland Co.  
Marcus Delgado — New York University  
Prentecia Floyd — Standard Insurance Co.  
Sharon Fowler — Alliant Insurance Services Inc.  
Joel Garcia — Cox Enterprises Inc.  
Siobhan Gittens — Cox Enterprises Inc.  
Jamie Graham — Boehringer Ingelheim Corp.  
Helen Hart — Norfolk Southern Corp.  
Lauren Hattauer — Imerys  
Jennifer Jahnke — DXC Technology  
Pratik Jhanb — FIS  
Gisele Kalonzo-Douglas — The Pavilion Off The Park  
Caroline Keller  
Alistair Kille — Honeywell International Inc.  
Robert Kohse  
Atul Mahajan — Oracle America Inc.  
Jacob McClendon — Quikrete Cos.  
David McMichael — Northpoint Commercial Finance  
Bethany Mowery — LexisNexis Risk Solutions Inc.  
Banks Neil — Honeywell International Inc.  
Sheri Oseghale — Workday Inc.  
Sean Palmer — Omnicell Inc.  
Ashley Powell — LexisNexis Risk Solutions Inc.  
Lindsay Roach — Yardi Systems Inc.  
Ami Rodrigues — Under Armour Inc.  
Emily Shoda — Assurant Inc.  
Tamara Slogar — Workday Inc.  
Ezequiel Suarez — TelevisaUnivision Inc  
Jennifer Sutton — Workday Inc.  
JT Tilley  
Trey Wakefield — HP Inc.  
Melanie Walker — Travelport

### Get Involved with ACC Georgia

Want to get involved in the in-house counsel community? Joining an ACC Georgia committee is the best way to start. For more information, go to <https://www.acc.com/chapters-networks/chapters/georgia/chapter-committees>.

# An Employer's 7-Step RIF and Layoff Blueprint Guide

By Terri Stewart

An unfortunate result of the current state of economic uncertainty is that many employers are considering reductions-in-force (RIFs) or other layoffs. RIFs bring considerable risks with significant consequences – placing them among the most critical actions an employer will ever take.

If you believe a RIF is in your company's future, you should start planning now. The first step is reviewing the seven-step blueprint overview provided below.

### Step One: Identify Your Desired Goals and Objectives

This might be better categorized as “step zero,” because you should determine whether a RIF or series of layoffs is even necessary for your business before looking at any blueprint.

In determining your goals, consider the following: What is the business rationale for your planned action? What is the intended result? Do you hope to achieve cost savings? Do you hope to improve efficiency? Are there less-drastring alternatives that would help you achieve the same results, such as temporary furloughs, compensation reductions or worksite relocations?

### Step Two: Make Initial Logistical Decisions

Once you have decided that no other course of action will suffice, you should establish a decision-making team to take charge of the RIF. It should include a representative from each stakeholder area (e.g., human resources, legal, upper management, supervisors in affected areas, etc.) and closely coordinate with your workplace legal counsel.

That team should then make initial decisions about the planned actions, including:

- The depth of RIF necessary (how many positions to reduce);
- Whether voluntary separations will be solicited;
- The budget for your RIF (including legal fees, severance payouts, unemployment insurance, etc.);
- The timing of the layoffs;
- And various other critical conclusions.

## Longtime ACC GA Chapter Champion, Geoff Frost Joins as a Consultant



Geoff Frost

ACC-GA is pleased to announce that we've retained Geoff Frost as a consultant to support the board, initially by working to engage and expand our membership as well as deepen our relationships with our sponsor partners.

Geoff began working with ACC-GA leadership in 2008 by introducing board members to potential sponsors at law firms and legal service providers. In 2010, he worked with former ACC-GA President Betsy Griswold to conceive and launch the ACC Value Challenge CLE event in the Atlanta market (recently renamed the ACC/PBPA CLE Challenge). The event has helped ACC-GA raise over \$400,000 for Pro Bono Partnership of Atlanta. A few years later, Geoff worked with former Chapter President Creighton Frommer to conceive and launch the ACC Deep Dive events.

Geoff spent 15 years as the director of client development at Bondurant Mixson & Elmore and seven years in marketing at Morris Manning & Martin. He recently formed his own consulting practice and we're excited to officially engage him to work with board members on various projects and to interact directly with sponsors and potential sponsors. Geoff has already begun meeting with potential sponsors to ensure they are providing ACC members with quality programming and events – and we are excited to see the results that his strategic creativity and commitment will bring us all.

### Step Three: Create a Selection Process for Involuntary Layoffs

Perhaps the most scrutinized part of any RIF – and therefore the most critical – is the selection process used to determine which employees will be let go. There are a whole host of legal standards to consider in such a decision, and therefore you should only proceed with clear guidance from your workplace counsel.

What criteria will be used to make your selections? What are the safest options, and will those accomplish your business objectives? Will you use different selection criteria for different types of jobs – such as hour and salaried positions? If any employees impacted are unionized, then you need to evaluate your bargaining obligations. And before finalizing your plan, you need to run a statistical discrimination analysis of your intended selections to determine if the numbers suggest bias.

### Step Four: Understand the Various Intersecting Laws

Of course, RIFs are subject to many federal, state and local laws that need to be considered when proceeding with layoffs. They include the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA) and the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act, among others. These will impact your timing, your decision-making, your notification responsibilities and other aspects of your action. You first need to understand the legal landscape – and whether and which laws apply to any RIF – before you proceed.

### Step Five: Create Legal Documents

Once you have decided how to proceed, work with your legal counsel to develop applicable severance policies. These crucial documents need to take into consideration your company policies, federal benefits law (ERISA) and other related factors. You also need to develop any applicable release agreements required in exchange for severance benefits. There are several individual questions that should be answered for each worker as these are crafted, focusing on vacation and other PTO benefits, retirement/severance overlap, unemployment and the Older Worker Benefits Protection Act (OWBPA) for those age 40 or older.

### Step Six: Communicate

Perhaps the hardest part of a RIF is communicating the news to not only those selected for layoff but the rest of the workplace. These messages must be carefully crafted and delivered with empathy and understanding. You need to provide the proper support to those who are being laid off and to those remaining at your business. You should also consider whether public announcements are necessary for the local community.

### Step Seven: Miscellaneous Considerations

Prepare for the various additional steps necessary to carry out an effective RIF. This could include developing outplacement and other support resources for your workforce. These final steps will largely be tailored by your company's individual circumstances.

### Conclusion

We recommend attending one of our RIF webinars with Fisher Phillips attorneys to engage on this important topic and dive deeper. Fisher Phillips also offers a RIF compliance package that includes general information, checklists, sample WARN forms, sample severance agreements and other helpful information.

*We will continue to monitor the latest developments related to workplace law, so make sure you are subscribed to Fisher Phillips' Insight system to gather the most up-to-date information. If you have questions, please contact Fisher Phillips' Regional Managing Partner, Terri R. Stewart, at 404.240.4247 or [tstewart@fisherphillips.com](mailto:tstewart@fisherphillips.com).*



# ACC GA EVENT PHOTOS



## Join Your ACC Georgia Colleagues on LinkedIn

Without a doubt, one of the most popular benefits of being an ACC Georgia member is the professional networking. There's an easy way you can show your online network that you're a member – follow the ACC Georgia LinkedIn page. We've launched a new group to allow in-house counsel to network with colleagues and stay up to date on chapter news.

Log in to LinkedIn and type "Association of Corporate Counsel Georgia Chapter" in the search bar to find our page.

By following our page, you'll stay up to date on the latest member events, CLE luncheons and more happening. We look forward to connecting with you online!

# ACC GA EVENT PHOTOS



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