

Page: Submitter's Information
Chapter Name ACC Houston
Page: Achievement Award
Category Innovative Programming Effort
Chapter Name ACC Houston
Chapter Size Large (more than 851 members)
Entry Title The Leadership Experience: Empowering In-House Counsel to Lead, Influence, and Advance Across the Legal Landscape
Entry Description <p>ACC Houston (ACCH) launched The Leadership Experience to empower in-house counsel to step confidently into positions of greater influence within their organization and across industries. Recognizing that today's legal departments require not only legal expertise but also visionary leadership, this initiative was designed to meet our members where they are and take them to where they aspire to be.</p> <p>At the heart of this member-focused initiative are four (4) signature programs:</p> <p>(1) Law & Leadership. A series exploring the intersection between law, leadership, and strategic growth. Highlights include – (1) Pathways to the Top and Lessons Learned Along the Way; (2) Strategies for Managing a High-Performing Legal Team; (3) Sports General Counsel Panel, in collaboration with The Texas Lawbook the general counsel of the Houston Texas, Houston Rockets, and Houston Dynamo provided insights into their day-to-day and discussed pressing business and legal issues; (4) Board Readiness: How to Join a Private Company Board in collaboration with the Private Directors Association and The Texas Lawbook; and (5) Navigating the Complexities of Corporate Culture.</p> <p>(2) Speaker's Bureau. A platform allowing members to express interest in speaking opportunities on ACCH panels and with sponsoring organizations – elevating visibility and positioning our members as thought leaders.</p> <p>(3) GC Roundtable. Candid, high-level discussions among general counsel on current legal developments, legislative shifts, and evolving leadership demands – fostering peer learning and strategic insight.</p> <p>(4) Mini-MBA. A focused program equipping in-house counsel with essential business, leadership, and strategic decision-making skills.</p> <p>The Leadership Experience is more than a program, it is a transformative journey. It advances ACCH's mission to not only support in-house excellence, but to cultivate the next generation of legal and board-ready leaders. Through strategic partnerships, intentional programming, and a strong community, this initiative has positioned ACCH as a leader in professional development for in-house counsel.</p>
When was the program initiated? 4/1/2024

What was the project objective? Describe the steps you took to achieve this objective, including key strategies, activities, or milestones.

The objective was to empower members to lead, influence, and advance across the legal and business landscape. ACCH recognized that members were seeking more than CLE. Members wanted access to leadership development, increased visibility, and a pathway to greater executive influence.

Drawing on years of observations, conversations and member engagement, ACCH identified leadership gaps and responded with an innovative, member-centered initiative to address it. The vision was clear: support in-house counsel not only as legal advisors, but as strategic leaders.

To build momentum, ACCH introduced the concept early to trusted partners who quickly and enthusiastically agreed to support the initiative. With foundational partners in place, we launched The Leadership Experience, anchored by:

- Law & Leadership Series. Events intended to explore the intersection of law, leadership, and strategic growth. Highlights, thus far, include – (1) Pathways to the Top and Lessons Learned Along the Way, which featured top general counsel who shared their career journeys, discussed challenges they've faced, and offered insights on their approaches to team building, mentorship, and becoming a valued partner; (2) Strategies for Managing a High-Performing Legal Team, focused on what it takes to build, structure and evolve a modern legal department; (3) Sports General Counsel Panel; (4) Board Readiness: How to Join a Private Company Board in collaboration with the Private Directors Association and The Texas Lawbook; (5) Navigating the Complexities of Corporate Culture; and (6) The AI Revolution in Law: Jobs, Future Opportunities, and Ethics.
- A Speakers Bureau to amplify member voices.
- GC Roundtables & Conversations, offering candid peer dialogue on legal and leadership challenges.
- A planned Mini-MBA event, providing in-house counsel with practical business acumen and cross-functional leadership tools.

Through strategic planning, early collaboration, and meaningful partnerships, ACCH has delivered a transformational initiative that elevates its members and the legal profession.

How was the objective achieved? How did you measure success, and to what extent do you believe the objective was met?

We achieved our objective through high-impact programming, strong membership engagement and strategic partnerships. Success was measured by attendance, speaker participation, sponsor investments and feedback. The initiative meaningfully advanced member visibility, leadership, and professional growth.

Please describe the total budget allocated for your program or initiative. Include a brief breakdown of how the funds were distributed across key areas. In addition, explain how the budget was used effectively or creatively to maximize impact.

The initiative was executed at no cost to ACC Houston. Strategic partners fully sponsored all events and programming. The Speaker's Bureau was developed in-house with zero budget impact, allowing us to maximize value and reach while preserving chapter resources.

What significant obstacles or challenges did you encounter during the planning or implementation of your program or initiative? How did you address or overcome them? If you did not face major challenges, please explain why that may have been the case and what factors contributed to the smooth execution of your work.

A key challenge was building member awareness and designing a user-friendly Speaker's Bureau platform. While engagement grew through targeted outreach, the platform's search functionality remains a work in progress. We are continuing to refine it for better accessibility and visibility.

What do you anticipate will be the long-term impact of your project or initiative? Describe how the outcomes will extend beyond the immediate results, including any lasting benefits to the local/global ACC community. If applicable, explain how the initiative might be sustained, scaled, or replicated in the future.

The initiative will create a lasting pipeline of in-house leaders prepared for executive roles and board service. With scalable programs like the Mini-MBA and the Speaker's Bureau, it can be replicated by other chapters, amplifying impact across the ACC network and advancing the profession globally.

Please share what you are most proud to report about execution of this program. Please explain what this accomplishment means to you and how it reflects the values or goals of your work.

What ACC Houston (ACCH) is most proud of in executing The Leadership Experience is the way this initiative directly responded to the unspoken but deeply felt aspirations of our in-house counsel community. We created a platform that acknowledges and affirms the full professional potential of our members, not just as legal advisors, but as enterprise leaders, board candidates, and voices of influence in the broader business world.

We are particularly proud of the authenticity and relevance of our programming. From intimate GC Roundtables & Conversations to powerful Law and Leadership discussion to the launch of our Speaker's Bureau, each element was crafted to reflect where our members are and where they want to go. The enthusiastic response from our members and partners validated that we were meeting a real and unmet need.

Securing sponsorship support was further validation that this initiative meets a clear and compelling need. Our partners saw value in advancing in-house leadership, and their support helped us extend the reach, quality, and credibility of our programming.

This initiative reflects the core values of the ACCH: intentional service to members, innovation in program design, and a deep commitment to professional development that extends beyond CLEs. We are proud that we did not rely on a template – we created something original, tailored, and scalable.

To us, The Leadership Experience is more than a successful program. It represents a shift in how in-house counsel are seen and supported: as influential leaders who belong in executive conversations and boardrooms.

Please share how your project or initiative is innovative. Describe any original approaches, strategies, or tools you used to address a problem or achieve your goals. What makes your work stand out from more traditional methods.

The Leadership Experience is innovative because it redefines how we can support our members, not just as legal professionals, but as influential business leaders. ACC Houston recognized a gap: in-house counsel were underserved when it came to structured leadership-focused development. In response, we created a comprehensive initiative that is forward looking, member driven, and unlike traditional programming.

What makes this initiative stand out is its layered and intentional approach. Instead of delivering one-off leadership content, we designed an integrated experience that includes thought leadership, executive visibility, and career-building opportunities.

- Original strategies included:
- Early collaboration with Pye Legal to ensure alignment with evolving in-house career trajectories.
 - Leveraging a longstanding partnership with The Texas Lawbook to gain deeper and wider exposure to legal and business issues across Texas. We partnered closely to tap into their network, storytelling expertise, and editorial insight – amplifying reach and elevating the initiatives visibility and impact.
 - Launching a Speaker’s Bureau to give members a structured way to elevate their voices and participate on high-impact panels.
 - Curating the Law & Leadership Series, which includes diverse panels and Sports GC Conversations, offering unique insights into leadership from a high-profile, relatable lens.
 - Introducing a Mini-MBA program not as a standalone feature, but as a capstone to a broader leadership experience making the total offering novel, holistic, and high-value.

The initiative breaks the mold of traditional CLE focused programming by aligning with what in-house counsel are increasingly being asked to do: lead cross-functionally, influence business outcomes, and prepare for board service. By combining leadership education, career exposure, and strategic networks, The Leadership Experience is charting a new path for legal programming – one rooted in transformation, not tradition.

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