

## The Value of Legal at the Table

An Interview with Julie Spellman Sweet,  
General Counsel, Secretary, and Chief Compliance Officer, Accenture

**EDITORS' NOTE** Julie Sweet also oversees Accenture's Government Relations function and is a member of the company's Global Management Committee. Prior to joining Accenture in 2010, Sweet was a partner in the Corporate department of the law firm of Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP, which she joined in 1992. In 2009, she was recognized by *The Legal 500* for her work in equity offerings in the capital markets. Sweet speaks Mandarin Chinese and has spent substantial time working in Hong Kong and mainland China. She is a member of the board of trustees of Claremont McKenna College and holds a B.A. degree from Claremont McKenna College and a J.D. degree from Columbia Law School.



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our former CEO and now Executive Chairman, Bill Green, said that he was looking for my business judgment, not just my legal advice. That was important, because it was how I had always approached my practice. Being able to help grow and protect a business was attractive to me and Accenture has a management team that sees the General Counsel in that role.

### How do you define your role with Accenture?

Part of the role is supporting the board and corporate governance.

Another significant aspect is leading a global team that provides the legal support to help drive our business. As part of this, I focus on attracting and retaining the best talent because that kind of talent is critical to supporting \$25 billion in revenue.

Another component is risk management, which isn't about saying "no"; it's about understanding what we want to achieve and the risks involved and then helping to make decisions about how we're going to meet those objectives and balance risk. Because you can't grow without taking risk, a lot of what I do is help the business make good decisions about smart risk. That might include putting in preventive measures, like the right compliance programs, or helping make decisions about how we'll adapt to doing business in an emerging market, where you face different contract terms and expectations.

### Has the public dialogue on compliance been effective or does there need to be more change in terms of regulation?

The challenges that continue to plague even well-regulated markets are in the news every day. I believe the focus needs to be on smart regulation, based on a deep understanding by the government of both the businesses they are regulating and the actual dynamics of the marketplace.

Keep in mind that regulation also creates a public dialogue around an issue. Sometimes the dialogue itself has value, keeping important issues on the front page

### Is it tough to describe what makes Accenture different?

Not at all. Of the top 20 leaders, all but four of us have been with the company 20 years or more. Something keeps people here beyond just needing a paycheck and I think it comes down to our collegial, collaborative culture. We have an amazing ability to team across geographies, cultures, and workforces to deliver the best solutions to our clients. We also have the best people in the business and to ensure that they have necessary skills to serve clients and advance in their own careers, we invest significantly in their training and professional development. In fact, we invested more than \$810 million in training last year – that's why we're different.

### What is the value of cultural diversity within the firm?

We look at diversity through the widest possible lens. We capitalize on the diversity of our workforce across countries, cultures, generations, and a broad mix of education, experiences, and backgrounds, giving our clients access to a rich range of talent. At the same time, we understand that achieving success is a constant journey. For example, we have 80,000 women, which is terrific, but we know there is more to do. Our top leadership is directly engaged to ensure that we raise the bar on diversity.

### In bringing talent in, what makes for the right fit?

The ticket to the show starts with a strong skill set. But that is only the beginning. A person's leadership ability is critical. In Legal, we particularly look for three leadership qualities: understanding what integrity means; the ability to show empathy, because you need to understand the other point of view in order to be a better lawyer and communicate hard messages; and demonstrating the courage to deliver those hard messages.

For me, it's also about being willing to challenge yourself and your thinking. No one on my leadership team sits on the sidelines. Regardless of whether it's your specialty or not, everyone is empowered to participate. We make decisions as a leadership team, in an atmosphere where people have the opportunity to challenge whether we're making the right decisions, and we make sure we have heard everyone's point of view. ●

**COMPANY BRIEF** Accenture ([www.accenture.com](http://www.accenture.com)) is a global management consulting, technology services, and outsourcing company. It combines capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world's most successful companies, collaborating with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. The company has approximately 236,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries.

### When this opportunity presented itself, what made you feel it would be the right fit?

Three reasons come immediately to mind. First was Accenture's truly global footprint. While I did a lot of international work during my years practicing law, every day at Accenture I work on issues in different parts of the world and across multiple countries and cultures. I'm also excited by our push to expand into emerging markets.

Second, it was about the people. Accenture people are extremely smart and really care about each other. With our top 20 leaders located across the world, we enjoy tremendous diversity in thinking and perspective, which ultimately helps us deliver results and makes this a great place to work.

The third piece for me was the role of the General Counsel at Accenture, which is at the heart of the business. When I interviewed,