

Finding Your Seat at the Table as a Woman in the Middle East Checklist

This checklist includes key issues to consider for the in-house legal career journey of women in the Middle East. This checklist was prepared by the Association of Corporate Counsel, based mainly on the ACC Webcast titled [Finding Your Seat at the Table as a Woman in the Middle East](#) (March 23, 2021) - a webcast delivered by leading GCs in the region along with ACC Women In the House (WITH) and ACC Middle East & North Africa about their career journeys and their recommendations for creating the environment to support more women in finding their seat at the table.

- **THE MIDDLE EAST IS A DYNAMIC AND DIVERSE REGION:**
 - ❑ **The “Middle East” encompasses 20 countries over 2 continents** with different cultures, languages, legal traditions and political systems.
 - ❑ **Across cultures and continents there are more similarities than differences** in the experiences of women in the legal profession.
 - ❑ **There is a marked shift from exceptionalism to acceptance** of women lawyers, although its is happening at different paces in different countries

- **PROFESSIONAL DETOURS CAN MAKE YOU A BETTER LAWYER AND A BETTER PERSON:**
 - ❑ **There is no linear path to success.** Many, if not most, women lawyers take advantage of the revolving door between law firms, government and in-house positions
 - ❑ **Going in-house means becoming a pragmatic business partner and a people manager.** In-house practice is not the “softer” or “easier” option as the work can be hard and the hours long – it’s a change in focus.
 - ❑ **To be valued, become the Business Person in the Room with a Legal Specialty.** By presenting your knowledge and skills in ways that add immediate value to the business people you gain a seat at the table by becoming an indispensable voice.

- **WOMEN CAN USE THEIR SEAT AT THE TABLE TO CHANGE THE NATURE OF LEADERSHIP:**
 - ❑ **Self-doubt is women’s worst enemy** and can lead to over preparation and hesitancy, which undermines the confidence of others in the opinion stated or the recommendation made.
 - ❑ **Leadership models are changing,** towards more consensus-building, teamwork and an environment of psychological safety over raw competition. This model is promoted by women and suited to their talents.
 - ❑ **Work, Family, Social Life** are a difficult balance for everybody.
 - ❑ **Acceptance of women lawyers and of the legal role is increasing** as demonstrated by the shift from “what is she doing here?” to “What is the lawyer doing here?” when gathering around the table.
 - ❑ **Ensure Continuity by Elevating Voices and using your Seat** to act as a mentor and sponsor to others on their way to the table so they can claim their seat.

Learn More:

Watch the ACC Webcast: <https://onlineed.acc.com/learn/course/external/view/elearning/1052/finding-your-seat-at-the-table-as-a-woman-in-the-middle-east>

Speakers: Wafa Derouiche, VP & Chief Compliance Officer, TE Connectivity | Sahia Ahmad, General Counsel, Dubai Tourism | Joanna Addison, Head of Legal, Qatar Shell | Ghada Qaisi Audi, Deputy Executive Director, CAIR-SFBA | Raya Alkhatib, General Counsel, American Express Saudi Arabia

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