



The Thomson Reuters Institute

*presents*

**The 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Law Firm COO & CFO Forum**  
*Progress, Pitfalls and Possibilities - Exploring the Future of Work*

October 27-29, 2021

New York Marriott Downtown  
85 West Street  
New York, NY

Co-Chairs

**Jeffrey Connor**, *Chief Financial Officer*, McGuireWoods LLP  
**James Jones**, *Senior Fellow, Center on Ethics and the Legal Profession*, Georgetown University Law Center  
**Gretta Rusanow**, *Head of Advisory Services, Law Firm Group*, Citi Private Bank

PROGRAM (all times local)

**Day One**

**Wednesday, October 27**

**11:00am - 12:00pm**      **Registration & Luncheon**

**12:00pm**                **Opening Remarks**

**12:00pm - 1:15pm**      **Unbounded Expanse: Engineering the New Law Firm Workspace**

If necessity is the mother of invention, then COVID-19's legacy on legal services may be as the unexpected catalyst for revamped law firm real estate design. In the near-term, given the overwhelming popularity of remote work arrangements and the ongoing emphasis on cost-savings, numerous firms expect to reduce their office footprint through 2022 Q1, if not beyond. Further, as recent Gensler research attests, thanks to a pan-industry shift toward value-based economics and collaborative efficiencies, many employers are prioritizing workspace flexibility—including integrated technology solutions—as a core facet of more versatile, indeed futureproof, office settings. This interactive session invites participants to share influential design trends and organizational considerations shaping their operational model. Our panel will address new approaches toward maximizing employee engagement and overall productivity with so much uncertainty abound.

Presenters:

**1:15pm – 1:30pm**

**Break**

**1:30pm – 2:30pm**

**Critical Mass: Technology and Scalability in the Future of the Firm**

COVID-19 underscored the importance of technology on workplace productivity and engagement. Whether in (global) corporate legal departments or law firm settings, the ability of organizations to leverage cloud-based platforms and connect remotely was both expected and essential for business success. Now, with varied and diffuse return-to-office measures in effect across the profession, many employers are assessing the next phase of their technological journey with an eye on scalability, productivity, and cost. This session invites participants to think proactively about their firm’s strategic roadmap. What considerations make sense for small, midsize, or large organizations in the months to come?

Presenters:

**2:30pm – 2:45pm**

**Break**

**2:45pm – 3:45pm**

**The Undiscovered Country: Managing Employee Sentiments and Workforce Concerns**

If initial employee feedback is any indication, palpable reticence exists—especially within the partner and senior associate ranks—of returning full time to the office. Indeed, for every first- or second-year associate eager to recoup a lost year of in-person mentorship, his or her more seasoned peers appear content to maintain at least a semblance of remote work flexibility, even if only a few days per week. This discussion addresses the delicate art of managing employee anxieties against organizational priorities and vision. What risks or liabilities should firms consider from a policy and employer perspective? How insistent should firms become on mandatory vaccinations? And will the legal profession achieve a “market standard” for return-to-office expectations?

Presenters:

**3:45pm – 4:00pm**

**Break**

**4:00pm – 5:00pm**

**A Sound of Thunder: (Re)establishing COVID-Era Workplace Culture**

A key driver behind the return-to-office movement has been a belief in the preservation of organizational culture and the spontaneous interaction of shared workspaces. For many business executives, in-office arrangements allow for clarity, communication, and overall accountability in employee engagement and performance. Absent physical proximity, such elements may prove increasingly difficult to measure—let alone enforce, especially in the case of enterprise culture, where notions of “family-like” environments and “inclusivity” reign supreme. This session solicits insights from law firm leaders in organizational development. What does law firm culture *truly* look like in a COVID-19 world? In an era where even the slightest action holds broad ramifications, what lessons have business leaders gleaned over the past 18 months about “ways of working” in a pandemic?

Presenters:

**5:00pm**

**Conclusion**

**Day Two**  
**Thursday, October 28**

**8:00am - 9:00am**      **Breakfast and Registration**

**9:00am - 9:15am**      **Opening Remarks**

**9:15am - 10:30am**      **A Brief Interregnum: The State of the US Legal Market**

“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards,” observed Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard in his 1844 *Journals*. A learned and deeply introspective man, Kierkegaard’s rumination on the burden of history finds a modern-day corollary within a highly partisan nation, roiled by trauma, still navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. Our opening conversation scrutinizes Am Law 200 financial performance following a year of ostensive growth. What truths does 2021 data reveal about profitability and growth in the profession? Was 2020’s success story a bellwether or mirage for an industry defined by segmentation? How confident should law firm leaders be about a rapid economic rebound? And what lessons can recent events offer firm executives after a year like no other?

Presenters:

**James Jones**, *Senior Fellow, Center on Ethics and the Legal Profession*, Georgetown University Law Center

**Gretta Rusanow**, *Head of Advisory Services, Law Firm Group*, Citi Private Bank

**10:30am – 10:45am**      **Morning Break**

**10:45am - 12:00pm**      **Into the Roil: New Directions in Client Service for the COVID-19 Era**

The coronavirus pandemic’s impact on corporate clients has been diffuse and profound. From business continuity concerns to (global) supply chain disruption, employee well-being, data security and privacy compliance, or even “return to office” vaccination protocols, corporate counsel are more reliant than ever upon trusted legal guidance and business resources. Anchored by insights from an esteemed panel of chief legal officers, this session offers an important opportunity for law firm executives to understand key client pressure points and the new rules of engagement in the current landscape. Over one year into the pandemic, are law firms doing enough to support their customers? Is the legal industry’s shift toward virtual client experiences a hindrance or asset to the overall client-law firm relationship? And what more can outside counsel do to help corporate counsel support *their* clients during a moment of unprecedented sociopolitical and economic unrest?

Moderator:

Panelists:

**12:00pm - 1:00pm**      **Networking Luncheon**

**1:00pm - 2:15pm**      **Breakout Sessions**

*In these facilitated breakouts, Forum participants will have the opportunity to share practical ideas with leading firms and industry peers.*

Breakout #1:

**Equipoise: Fiscal Discipline and Business Investment in the Current Climate**

Law firm leaders face a crucial challenge: how to balance the fiscal prudence of 2020 with immediate (or long-term) business growth. On the one hand, realized cost savings offer a clear (if unexpected) path forward for firms in the months to come. On the other hand, with industry competition and evolving client needs abound, proactive providers recognize the imperative for people, process, and technological investment as the shape of modern commerce takes form. This discussion ponders the inherent tension between enterprise-wide cost-savings and essential business transformation in a tenuous economy. How can firms maintain fiscal discipline without cutting to the proverbial bone? What opportunities exist for lean evolution across the organization?

Moderator:

Panelists:

Breakout #2:

**Green Land: Strategy and Opportunity in the Lateral Market**

For all the *Sturm und Drang* of the pandemic's early days, the US lateral market has aggressively rebounded in 2021. Industry observers point to the flurry of opportunistic hires in Q4 2020 as a de facto launch point wherein many of the profession's wealthiest firms snatched up talent and reeled in key customers to further cement their market presence. Not unexpectedly, lateral partners fared well in terms of total compensation. And in 2021, the associate ranks, replete with impressive signing bonuses and tantalizing flexible work arrangements, have also followed suit. What is one to make of this high-stakes battle for talent? Do the early returns on investment justify bold behavior? How should firms track performance or coach new hires amidst a hybrid or remote working model? And will the recent surge in lucrative bonuses pose (unwelcome) financial challenges down the road?

Moderator:

Panelists:

Breakout #3:

**True North: Business Continuity Planning Across the Profession**

Recent events tested the strength and versatility of business continuity planning in law firms worldwide. Whether at solo, small, or large organizations, business executives made pivotal—and presumably difficult—decisions across four key pillars of leadership, talent, facilities, and communications. Ever mindful of the next great threat, this discussion builds upon after action reports and lessons learned from seasoned industry leaders and crisis management professionals. What approaches worked well—or left more to be desired—in the eyes of our panel? Are firms sufficiently prepared for things to come?

Moderator:

Panelists:

**2:30pm - 2:45pm**

**Break**

**2:45pm - 3:45pm**

**Thursday Keynote:  
Event Horizon: Examining the Evolution of Remote Work**

2020 necessitated a paradigm shift for nearly every industry imaginable. From agriculture to entertainment, financial services to technology, once-abstract ideas over digital lives and the future of work came to pass out of urgent necessity. Now, as global business and consumer spending continue to rebound, will the nature of modern work revert to old, familiar routines, or might recent transformational experiences augur a new frontier of possibility? Please join us as the Thomson Reuters Institute proudly hosts a keynote address exploring the systemic shifts in the ways we work. Attendees will discover how leading companies are recalibrating operations and embracing a more versatile corporate culture representative of both the organization's and employees' best interests.

Presenter:

**3:45pm - 4:00pm**

**Break**

**4:00pm – 5:00pm**

**Breakout Sessions**

*Please join us for three simultaneous roundtables intended to foster robust conversation amongst attendees.*

Breakout #1:

**Stir of Echoes: Law Firm Lessons from the SolarWinds Hack**

Widely perceived as one of the worst cyberattacks on American soil, the December 2020 Russian hack of Texas-based SolarWinds Orion platform impacted approximately 18,000 public and private sector clients, including the Pentagon, the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, the National Nuclear Security Administration, the Treasury, Microsoft, Cisco, Intel, and Deloitte. The months-long infiltration of Orion users' data and IT systems poses serious ramifications for law firms who counsel the aforementioned organizations, their subsidiaries, or suppliers. Indeed, as numerous cybersecurity analysts attest, the greatest lesson law firms can glean from the SolarWinds hack is the growing preponderance of third-party threats to enterprise security and privacy. This timely discussion offers a rigorous update on best practices and potential vulnerabilities for legal service providers today. Are firms prepared for the new wave of incursions?

Moderator:

Panelists:

Breakout #2:

**A Season of Storms: Assessing and Preparing for the Next Pandemic**

Among the many sobering realities of the past 21 months is the growing chorus of medical personnel warning of the next pandemic. For many, it is less a question of *if* but *when* a novel zoonotic virus will make its presence known across the globe. Indeed, with SARS-CoV-2 just one of an estimated 500,000+ pathogens capable of spilling over from animal to human, the onus is on public health and government officials to proactively identify and curtail nascent threats—all while weathering the existing storm. This discussion features expert commentary from a panel of preeminent public health leaders on areas of interest and concern for the scientific community. Is the nation (and world) prepared?

Moderator:

Panelists:

Breakout #3:

**Agents of Change: Alternative Career Pathways for the C-Suite**

Much has been said about alternative careers for corporate lawyers and their law firm counterparts. Less, however, is known about career opportunities for members of the law firm C-suite. Given the unique challenges of managing a firm, what industries or sectors translate well for seasoned industry leaders? What are best practices for leveraging professional networks and/or client contacts when searching for the right opportunity? This session offers a rare opportunity for panelists and attendees to exchange candid thoughts on traversing the road less traveled.

Moderator:

Panelists:

**5:00pm – 6:00pm**

**Thursday Night Reception**

**Day Three**  
**Friday, October 29**

**8:30am - 9:30am**

**Partner Talks & Breakfast**

*Please join us for three consecutive 15-minute presentations designed for law firm executives.*

Partner Talk #1:

**Title**

Description

Presenter:

Partner Talk #2:

**Title**

Description

Presenter:

Partner Talk #3:

**Title**

Description

Presenter:

**9:30am - 10:45am**

**Quantum Leap: Advancing Firmwide Competitive Intelligence**

Although many firms recognize the value of competitive intelligence (“CI”) from a business development and marketing standpoint, few succeed in fully realizing its intrinsic value to the enterprise. When properly leveraged, competitive intelligence can fundamentally transform law firm operations, practice group performance and strategic

growth, and help close the gap between industry peers and Big 4 competitors. This session offers a rigorous examination of “next-level” CI frameworks for maximum impact across the business. Participants will discover how to sell competitive intelligence 2.0 to the partnership and firm; how to foster a culture of commitment amongst business teams; and, perhaps most importantly, how to establish attainable benchmarks when assessing ROI.

Moderator:

**Marcie Borgal Shunk**, *President & Founder*, The Tilt Institute

Panelists:

**10:45am – 11:00am**

**Break**

**11:00am - 12:00pm**

**Aftershocks: Leading Firmwide Initiatives Around Corporate Social Responsibility**

This past year saw many firms publicly denounce racial inequality and “demand accountability,” in the words of Paul Weiss Chairman Brad Karp, across every corridor of society. In addition to market-facing messaging, many firms embraced the broader mantle of corporate social responsibility (CSR) by looking inward at their own organizational progress around inclusive cultures, ethical suppliers, eclectic client teams, or diverse partner classes. This conversation solicits frank perspectives from strategic leaders at their respective firms. How crucial a priority is CSR heading into 2022? Are firms facing greater pressure from their employees or customers when it comes to action and equality? As key decision-makers, how are executives defining policy and measuring overall progress?

Moderator:

Panelists:

**12:00pm**

**Closing Remarks**