

## **AABANY 2025 Fall Conference**

### **General Counsel Roundtable: Navigating Leadership and Legal Challenges**

New York Law School

Saturday, September 27th, 2025

2:30 PM – 4:00 PM

#### Speakers

Yumi Lawlor, Head of Legal, Shop My Shelf, Inc.

Terry Shen, General Counsel, ISS STOXX

Liz Nie, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary, Acorns Grow

Kazuko Wachter, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary, EquiLend

#### Moderator

Steven Li, Partner, Freshfields

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#### **Program Agenda**

Join us for an engaging program designed for forward-thinking legal professionals. The General Counsel Roundtable is showcasing visionary in-house legal leaders from financial services to technology to share their expertise on the evolving demands and opportunities faced by general counsel. Through interactive discussions, participants will explore authentic leadership, cultivate resilience, and learn the art of setting boundaries in the workplace to avoid legal pitfalls in cross functional role. The roundtable will also emphasize the critical role of mentorship in fostering professional growth and navigating complex legal and business landscapes. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies and practical tools to enhance their effectiveness and influence as trusted legal advisors within their organizations.

At the end of the program, attendees will be able to:

- Analyze current trends and challenges facing general counsel, including regulatory developments, corporate governance, and evolving culture and expectations, with a focus on authentic leadership and executive resilience.
- Evaluate effective approaches to risk management, crisis response, and cross-functional collaboration, while learning how to set boundaries and prioritize well-being in high-pressure environments.
- Develop practical strategies for advancing the influence and effectiveness of general counsel, emphasizing the importance of mentorship and fostering leadership skills in a rapidly changing legal and business landscape.

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#### **2:30 PM - 2:35 PM: Welcome and Introduction**

- Opening remarks and overview of the roundtable objectives.
- Introduction of distinguished speakers and participants.

#### **2:35 PM - 2:50 PM: Navigating Current Legal Trends and Challenges as Authentic Leader**

- Analysis of regulatory developments, corporate governance, and evolving expectations.
- Insights on risk management, crisis response, and cross-functional collaboration.
- Discussion on the principles of authentic leadership.
- Case studies and real-life examples from in-house legal leaders.

#### **2:50 PM - 3:05 PM: Setting Boundaries Between Business Demands and Internal Pressure of Perfectionism**

- Saying “no” strategically to unrealistic client demands
- Prioritize by focusing on the most critical legal business demands and delegate less urgent tasks.
- Communicate your boundaries clearly to colleagues and stakeholders to manage their expectations.
- Practice self-compassion

#### **3:05 PM - 3:20 PM: Influence Without Authority While Managing Up and Across**

- Build strong relationship to foster trust and collaboration
- Leverage emotional intelligence to navigate companies’ politics and challenging relationships with empathy and tact
- Be a strategic partner to enhance your influence and value to the organization
- Seek feedback and adapt

#### **3:20 PM - 3:35 PM: Cultivating Resilience in High-pressure Environments**

- Set realistic goals to avoid feeling overwhelmed
- Develop a support network of colleagues, friends and mentorship
- Evaluate and prepare effective approaches to risk management

- Practice mindfulness and embrace growth mindset to manage stress and view setbacks as opportunities rather than as failures.

**3:35 PM - 3:50 PM: Other Best Practices to Manage General Counsel Role**

- General Counsels share their own practices

**3:50 PM - 4:00 PM: Questions and Answers**

**NY CLE Credit**

1.5 Law Practice Management  
(Non-transitional ONLY)

## **Bibliography**

10 Tips for Director Conduct in the Boardroom: The Year in Governance:

<https://businesslawtoday.org/2025/08/10-tips-for-director-conduct-in-the-boardroom-the-year-in-governance/>

Bringing Authenticity to the Practice of Law:

[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/business\\_law/resources/business-law-today/2022-august/bringing-authenticity-to-the-practice-of-law/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/business_law/resources/business-law-today/2022-august/bringing-authenticity-to-the-practice-of-law/)

14 Ways to Prepare for Your First General Counsel Role: <https://docket.acc.com/14-ways-prepare-your-first-general-counsel-role>

Top 10 Tips to Develop In-House Legal Leaders: <https://www.acc.com/top-10-tips-develop-house-legal-leaders>

Diverse Outside Counsel: Who's Getting the Business?: <https://www.theiilp.com/Diverse-Outside-Counsel>

Authentic leadership in law: why integrity, not reputation, defines success:

<https://www.canadianlawyermag.com/news/opinion/authentic-leadership-in-law-why-integrity-not-reputation-defines-success/391627>

AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP: WHAT IT IS & WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

<https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/authentic-leadership#:~:text=What%20Is%20Authentic%20Leadership?,not%20just%20its%20bottom%20line.>

New general counsel checklist: top 10 ways to

succeed <https://legal.thomsonreuters.com/en/insights/articles/new-gc-top-10-ways-to-succeed-in-your-new-role>

Mastering Your First 100 Days as a General Counsel: Five Key Takeaways:

<https://www.axiomlaw.com/blog/first-hundred-days-general-counsel>

7 Essential Soft Skills Every General Counsel Should Master:

<https://www.lexisnexis.com/community/insights/legal/b/thought-leadership/posts/7-essential-soft-skills-every-general-counsel-should-master>

## **Faculty Biography**

### **Yumi Lawlor**

Head of Legal, Shop My Shelf, Inc.

**Yumi Lawlor** is Head of Legal of Shop My Shelf, Inc., a Series B startup empowering the creator economy and product discovery. Prior to joining ShopMy, Yumi also served as General Counsel at Forage Technology Corporation and January Technologies, Inc., and as in-house counsel at Etsy, Instacart, and Macy's. She earned her law degree from what is now University of California College of the Law, San Francisco (aka UC Hastings) and her undergraduate degree from New York University.

Yumi is a member of AABANY. She also won the NAPABA Law Foundation's 2009 Judge Thomas Tang and Dr. Pearl Tang Moot Court Competition and is proudly a 2020 NAPABA Leadership Advancement Program fellow.

Yumi is admitted to the bar in California and is registered in-house counsel in the State of New York.

### **Steven Li**

Partner, Freshfields

**Steven Li** focuses his practice on advising public and private companies in a variety of merger and acquisition transactions, including domestic and cross-border acquisitions and divestitures, negotiated and unsolicited transactions, carve-out transactions, minority investments, business combinations involving SPACs and spin-offs. He also counsels clients on activism defense, governance, securities, finance and other general corporate matters. Steven currently serves on the Mergers, Acquisitions & Corporate Control Contests Committee of the New York City Bar. Steven received his B.A. from the Johns Hopkins University and JD from Harvard Law School.

### **Liz Nie**

General Counsel & Corporate Secretary, Acorns Grow

**Liz Nie** serves as the General Counsel & Corporate Secretary of Acorns Grow, the parent company behind financial wellness apps Acorns, Acorns Early, GoHenry and Pixpay. In this capacity, she leads the global legal function while also overseeing U.K. compliance, data privacy and risk.

Prior to Acorns, Liz was the Global Head of Commercial, Product & WeWork Workplace at WeWork, following her role as Vice President, Corporate Legal Affairs, at NBCUniversal, a Comcast Corporation subsidiary. Her legal career began at Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP, where she managed securities, banking and M&A transactions. Liz grew up in Beijing and

Brooklyn and holds degrees from Princeton University and the University of California, Berkeley School of Law.

### **Terry Shen**

General Counsel, ISS STOXX

**Terry Shen** is the General Counsel of ISS STOXX. He is responsible for all legal matters relating to the ISS STOXX business, including corporate transactions, regulatory affairs, contracting, intellectual property, human resources, litigation, and compliance across the 19 countries in which ISS STOXX operates.

Previously, Terry was a partner at the global law firm Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer. Before joining Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer, he practiced law at Sullivan & Cromwell and was an investment banker at JPMorgan Chase. Terry's deep experience with global capital markets extends to business risk assessment, corporate governance, ethics, compensation and stakeholder communications.

Terry holds a J.D. from Columbia University and A.B. magna cum laude from Dartmouth College.

### **Kazuko Wachter**

General Counsel and Corporate Secretary, EquiLend

**Kazuko Wachter** is the General Counsel and Corporate Secretary at EquiLend. She oversees the company's global Legal and Compliance functions and is a member of the executive leadership team. Kazuko brings nearly two decades of legal and strategic leadership experience advising executive teams and boards across both public and private companies. Kazuko is recognized as a trusted strategic advisor with deep expertise in corporate governance, M&A, regulatory compliance, privacy, intellectual property and technology. Prior to joining EquiLend in 2025, Kazuko served as Chief Legal Officer and Chief Strategy Officer at Prism Financial Products, a multinational broker-dealer and fintech firm, where she oversaw the global legal, compliance and human resources functions. Before that, she was Division General Counsel at Moody's Analytics, serving as chief counsel for the company's largest business unit, and co-chairing its Asian Leadership Initiative Committee.

She has served on the Board of the Asian American Bar Association of New York and the Arnold & Porter Alumni Alliance Advisory Board, as well as been an active member of the U.S. and international General Counsel legal community through the L Suite and the Women's General Counsel Network.

Kazuko is based in New York and is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and Temple University's James E. Beasley School of Law.