

# CORONAVIRUS, HENGARTNER (LINDT): «IT WILL ACCELERATE THE LEGAL INDUSTRY'S TRANSFORMATION»

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**Also for Lindt, the Swiss chocolatier company founded in 1845 and known for its chocolate products, the pandemic represented an unprecedented situation. Ueli Hengartner, Head Legal Europe & Compliance Lindt, has taken part to Legalcommunity.ch initiative [«how are you coping with the pandemic?»](#) telling how the legal work has changed and the scenarios he foresees for the post-Covid legal world. Among other things, according to Ueli, «in-person meetings will decline and the use of information and communication technology will increase»...**

**What has been the major impacts on your work until now?**

Working in an international, fast moving environment, I often come across complex legal issues that require quick and pragmatic solutions. Even more so, than already before, I feel, however, that Covid-19 requires us in-house lawyers to be even more creative and think outside the box. The legal department is in a unique position, being one of the few groups within a company that has broad insight on all facets of the business. I find that a holistic mindset can prove very valuable in the

problem-solving process.

### **How do you see the future of legal field after Covid-19?**

The Covid-19 pandemic will significantly accelerate the legal industry's transformation, which had already started before Covid-19. Law schools will have to offer more online courses and programs, courts may go digital with further use of conference calls and video hearings. In-house legal departments will need to rely even more on legal and communication technology. As video conferencing replaces face-to-face meetings, the amount of travel will reduce, which will have a positive impact on costs and potentially efficiency.

### **In your view, is there an opportunity for in-house lawyers, or not? Why?**

Out of most crises, certain opportunities arise. In-house legal teams have the chance to rise to the challenge and prove to be a valuable and constructive partner that businesses need in this unprecedented situation. Those legal departments that can quickly adopt, and provide their stakeholders and clients with the support they need, will thrive under these new circumstances.

### **How have you coped with working remotely?**

Having always worked in an international environment, and therefore being used to different time zones and flexible work hours, I am able to cope well with the remote working situation. Challenging, however, having two small children at home, is dividing working hours and childcare between me and my wife. On the positive side, it allows us to spend valuable time together as a family.

### **How do you foresee the legal *new normal*?**

I am certain that in-person meetings will decline and the use of information and communication technology will increase. Legal tech solutions will continue to change the legal landscape and require law firms to reevaluate and shape their services to compete with alternative legal service providers gaining traction in the market.

### **Is there a particular anecdote you want to share...**

Most of the calls that I currently participate in are video calls, something that technically was already possible before Covid-19, but rarely used. Because of Covid-19 the rather paradox situation has occurred that despite social distancing requirements, I have been able to see (albeit virtually) many of my colleagues and business partners for the first time, although we may have already been working together for months or years. I found this to be a positive side effect of the pandemic that I was not expecting.