

CORONAVIRUS: PICCALUGA, FOR GENERAL COUNSELS «MORE OPPORTUNITIES THAN THREATS»

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From remote work to handling past and new contracts, the role of general counsel has changed during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is true also for **Federico Piccaluga**, General Counsel Duferco and ACC Europe country representative for Switzerland since 2016, that has taken part to **legalcommunity.ch initiative** ["how are you coping with the pandemic?"](#). Federico, with his international in-house experience in the commodities sector, has told us new daily routine and the major challenges he sees for the future. Indeed, in this difficult times, corporate lawyers have to cope with digitalization and new ways of finding solutions...

What has been the major impact in your work?

I would say covid-19 impacted my work in a double way. Firstly, a remarkable increase of work connected to past and new contracts in all divisions of my company: energy (trading and retail), industrial, shipping, and investment. Of course, the impact differs depending on the business, even though this general trend can be reported in all sectors. In particular, the contract management involves both extraordinary transactions and day-to-day operations due to this emergency. The second major change is the smart working: from one day to another, I have found myself to cope with this. As lawyer, this might represent a new complexity in our role. The sudden switch has not been easy, but, overall, I think this represent an opportunity.

How are you personally coping with remote work?

Personally, I don't dislike working from home. As for in-house lawyers is a great challenge as we are not used with digitalization. This situation put us in the condition to take this road. Being in a way "forced" to go this direction could be an occasion of improvement, digitally speaking. At the very beginning, it has not been without efforts . But my company has put in place all essential tools and everything has gone smoothly so far.

Threats and opportunities for legal field

I see more opportunity than threats to be honest. As in-house counsel can handle lots of fields and find solution to problems, I see a positive trend for the future. For instance, we are able to deal with advisory to the board, employment issues, all type of litigation, compliance with new regulations. In my views, all this represents a great opportunity.

How legal sector will change face after coronavirus?

To this purpose, I would like to underline a particular aspect. As we are used to face to face meeting both inside the company and with our external consultants, it will be difficult to overcome this and coronavirus will change the manner we have proceeded till now. Physical meeting is crucial for us: for example, corporate lawyers and external consultant normally meet physically for a series of reasons. First of all, we discuss confidential topics that cannot be told over the phone or via mail. It won't be easy at the very beginning to overcome our normal habits but it's the only way right now and it probably changes the way we were used to.

A particular story you want to tell...

I was about to complete an asset deal in Italy. As you know, closing involves a physical exchange of documents among parties. In order not to lose this transaction, we created a team which basically registered all single steps in precise details and used all the technology instruments available in order to carry on anyway. This positive experience taught us that coronavirus wouldn't stop a deal from closing. The operation was successful without anybody needed to move and with all legal requirements.