

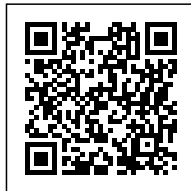
S.T. DUPONT, THE ONE COUNSEL SHOW

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(Translation: Ilaria Iaquina, article «S.T. Dupont, the one counsel show» published on [MAG 106](#))

«In France we say that being a lawyer is not a job, but a state». This is how our conversation with **Joana Roucayrol**, group general counsel at S.T. Dupont, the Paris-based company that designs, manufactures, and markets luxury goods such as pens, lighters, fashion articles, leather goods and accessories.

She has been working for S.T. Dupont since June 2016 but in the past, before leading the legal department at Le Tanneur et Cie, she was a courtroom lawyer, focusing on commercial, IT and criminal matters. Therefore, «seven years ago, when I moved in-house, I discovered a new job, completely different from that of a lawyer in a law firm. I am happy to be an in-house counsel, working for an internal client. But sometimes I miss the courts and the dresses. Maybe one day I will come back to my first love: the business lawyer's profession».

MAG met Joana Roucayrol to talk with her about her activities, challenges and the main cases she's had in the last few months. Here is what she told us.

So far 2018 has been a busy year for the legal arm of S.T. Dupont...

For sure! On July 20th we shut our flagship store located in Paris Avenue Montaigne. It was a long and hard negotiation (regarding the amount of eviction indemnity) with the landlord that finally

ended well for both parties. Then in April we opened our 13th subsidiary, located in South Korea. This required an important support from the legal department in the various stages of the operation and also some routine corporate activities.

You are the only in-house lawyer in S.T. Dupont's legal department, a multinational company active in different markets. What do you oversee?

Actually, I oversee corporate compliance and governance, contracts and brands in general. I would say that I spend almost 50% of my time drafting contracts, 20% managing our brand portfolio, 15% in compliance and 15% in corporate governance. As a French listed company, S.T. Dupont has lots of formalities to respect and follow.

How do you do all this alone in 13 different countries?

It is a hard job, but since my arrival I am working, with the help of our cfo, to implement a specific process to respect for legal assistance so that we can know what our subsidiary are doing. Some subsidiaries work without my help, so we are trying to implement a kind of validation process model.

Do you work with outside counsel, from law firms, to do your daily activities?

Yes, I have external counsel helping me on IP matters since we have a wide portfolio of products and brands. And, of course, due to the fact that in France in-house lawyers can't represent their client companies before the courts, we have an external counsel in case of any litigation.

How do you choose them?

Because of trust. I think personal relationships are very important when choosing a lawyer or a firm over another. I used to work with our IP counsel in my previous company. The lawyer following the litigation side is an historical partner of S.T. Dupont group. You work side by side with external lawyers; for this reason trust, understanding and relationships are very important and prevail over other factors.

Many in-house departments are also using new technologies to streamline work. Have you tried them? What do you think about them?

I do not use them much. I think it is possible to ask machines to draft contracts, but it is risky. Each contract is not replaceable by any other. Maybe technology can draft contracts faster, but we should keep in mind that human knowledge and intelligence will not be replaced by artificial intelligence. Technology can help streamlining basic standardized and automated tasks and monitoring contracts or activities' life circles.

If you had to choose a major challenge in your daily job what would you mention?

The way I am seen as head of legal in companies. My *cheval de bataille*, as we say in France, that means my personal and professional challenge is to change the mindset of company's management team. The legal department is not a cost centre. In-house lawyers are not just litigation avoiders or risks management experts, but we can also be part of the strategic development of the company. We don't make money, but we can help our companies save or generate it.