



PwC 28th Annual CEO Survey

Key takeaways for
Chief Legal Officers

Legal Business Solutions
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Top CEO priorities in 2025: Key takeaways for CLOs and their teams

What is on the agenda of CEOs this year and how can Chief Legal Officers (CLOs) and their teams support their corporate strategies?

In January 2025, PwC published the 28th Annual Global CEO Survey '[Reinvention on the Edge of Tomorrow](#)' highlighting the key business opportunities, and challenges, of more than 4,700 CEOs across the globe.

In this update, PwC's Legal Business Solutions team shares top takeaways for CLOs and their teams from this year's CEO survey, highlighting opportunities for in-house legal teams to partner with their CEOs and boards, and support their business in the coming 12 months.

Key takeaways for CLOs and their teams

01 Innovation and digital transformation

The CEO priority

A top priority for CEOs is driving the adoption of new technologies including Generative AI, while fostering a culture of innovation, and ensuring the organisation stays ahead of industry trends. According to this year's CEO Survey, CEOs are prioritising the integration of Generative AI (GenAI) into technology platforms, business processes, and workflows. Only two years after GenAI appeared on the radar of most executives, companies around the world are adopting it at scale. What's more, many CEOs are seeing promising results: more than half (56%) of the CEOs surveyed told us that GenAI has resulted in efficiencies in how employees use their time, while around one-third report increased revenue (32%) and profitability (34%).

The CEO challenge

Only a third of CEOs have high trust in embedding AI into key processes.

“Realising the potential of GenAI will depend on employees knowing when and how to use AI tools in their work, and understanding the potential pitfalls.”

What actions can CLOs take

While integrating GenAI into their legal departments is a great opportunity for CLOs to maximise efficiencies across their teams, they also have a key role to play in helping their companies to develop and build frameworks and practices for responsible AI. CLOs and their teams can take proactive steps to ensuring compliance with data privacy laws, managing intellectual property issues, and mitigating risks associated with AI deployment, to ensure that AI is used responsibly, while balancing commercial goals with reputational issues.

When it comes to navigating regulation, CLOs can also help support their CEOs in monitoring and advising on the impact of new AI laws, regulations and supervisory expectations on their companies through proactive regulatory horizon scanning.

“Looking forward, almost half of CEOs say that their biggest priorities over the next three years are integrating AI (including GenAI) into technology platforms as well as business processes and workflows.”

— 28th Annual CEO Survey



02 Climate action and sustainability

The CEO priority

This year's CEO survey reports that companies which invested in climate-friendly initiatives over the last five years are yielding financial benefits, with one-third of CEOs reporting increased revenue.

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One in three CEOs report that climate-friendly investments made over the last five years have resulted in increased revenue.”

— 28th Annual CEO Survey

When CEOs were asked take stock of the financial impact of their climate-friendly investments over the last five years, the CEO survey found that these moves were six times as likely to have increased revenue as to have decreased it. This finding is consistent with analysis of last year's CEO Survey data, which showed a link between a wide variety of climate actions and stronger financial performance.

For more on this, see our Legal Business Solutions Sustainability update on [managing sustainability across the value chain](#).

The CEO challenge

Creating value from sustainability starts with CEOs challenging themselves and their top teams to bring climate-friendly products, services and technologies to market. Implementing a data strategy for sustainability to enable their company to meet new reporting requirements while also providing leaders throughout the business with accurate, fact-based insights to inform decisions will also be critical to their business growth.

What actions can CLOs take

CLOs can help CEOs and their boards to develop new sustainable business value while successfully navigating the changing regulatory landscapes, securing government incentives, and ensuring accurate sustainability reporting. CLOs and their teams can also take action by mapping sustainability legislation and requirements in the different jurisdictions where their company operates, while anticipating new regulations and obligations through horizon scanning. Regulations in this area will also require businesses to scrutinise their customer and supplier relationships and the contracts that document these, and there is key role for legal teams to ensure that sustainability in relation to the value chain is addressed through their company's contractual arrangements.



03 Innovation and business model reinvention

The CEO priority

What will the global economy look like in 2025? Four in ten CEOs (42%) say their company will remain viable for less than ten years if it continues on its current path. Although many scenarios are possible, the CEOs surveyed recognise the need for business model reinvention, with many targeting new customer bases and innovating products and services.

The CEO challenge

CEOs globally see macro-economic volatility and inflation as the biggest threats in the year ahead. If CEOs need further encouragement to double down on reinvention, our survey highlights a strong association in the data between the number of reinvention actions companies have taken and the profit margins they achieve. Companies taking more actions also report bigger gains from GenAI over the last year.

What actions can CLOs take

Navigating industry reconfiguration is a job for the top team as a whole and will require strong engagement from the board. As businesses undergo significant change, CLOs have a critical strategic role to play in ensuring that broader transformation needs are being addressed.

Corporate governance is a key area for CLOs, including board advisory, policy development, and stakeholder engagement as well as strategic internal and external communication, and reputation management.

Every change programme will rely on CLOs and their teams to safeguard the business and actively participate in delivering the programme.

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Across all sectors, just under two-thirds of CEOs (63%) report having taken at least one significant action to change how their company creates, delivers and captures value.”

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For CEOs, the challenge is to envision the ecosystem in which their company will operate in the future. This means thinking through the impacts of megatrends (notably, but not only, climate change and AI), how customer needs will change, how value pools will shift and what roles distinct types of companies will play.”

— 28th Annual CEO Survey

Often that will mean taking a step back from specific requests for legal assistance and engaging in the wider strategy, considering the overall impact of the change and the opportunities for refining it at a strategic level as well as delivering the programme at a detailed level across the organisation. For example, the acquisition of a new AI tool might herald a shift to a digital channel that could fundamentally change the group operating model. Identifying this type of issue early and driving the changes needed for the business to maximise the opportunity is likely to be highly rewarding for both the CLO and the business.

CLOs can also play a proactive role in facilitating strategic partnerships, advising on and managing the legal aspects of new market entries, as well as overseeing compliance in relation to new business ventures.

Finally, in order to support broader business reinvention, CLOs must also ensure that their own departments are fit for purpose. In many cases, this will involve reinventing a legal function, with a robust digital-first strategy, that will transform the value they can bring to fuel the growth of their businesses into the future.

For more information about legal functional transformation, read [Accelerate GC: Reimagining the legal function to unlock broader business value](#).

04 Continual reinvention

The CEO priority

Leading a company during a period of great change requires CEOs and their boards to put in place measures to enable their companies to thrive despite rapid changes to their business and their industry.

The CEO challenge

Many CEOs report inconsistent strategic decision-making processes. Thorough, fact-based decision-making also comes into its own when emotions run high. On climate change, for example, CEOs are under scrutiny from customers, employees, investors and even family members. The same goes for how CEOs handle decisions related to AI, and questions about the future of legacy businesses in the face of industry reconfiguration. In these circumstances, robust decision-making processes can break deadlocks and support a bias to action. Our survey data confirms this: CEOs who report stronger decision processes also report more reinvention actions.

When it comes to an agile workforce, the CEO Survey finds that active reallocation of people is associated with higher profitability. There is a strong link between higher levels of resource reallocation (both financial and human resources) and the amount of revenue coming from distinct new businesses, underlining that reinvention and dynamic resource reallocation go hand in hand.

What actions can CLOs take

Navigating change whilst maintaining business growth requires a strong corporate structure where the quality of strategic decision-making is robust, human and financial resources can be reallocated to meet changing business needs, and there is a strong compliance culture allowing the company to manage risk effectively. CLOs can support their CEOs in all of these areas by aligning the legal department strategy with business goals and agile decision-making, while implementing best practices for decision-making, ensuring transparency, countering biases, and evaluating risks comprehensively. In addition, CLOs can work with HR directors to advise on the legal implications of resource shifts, support restructuring efforts, ensure compliance during reallocation and help manage labour relations processes, supporting employee trust and engagement.



Conclusion

As CEOs envision the future ecosystem of their industry, they need the support of their top team and board to navigate the complex and uncertain impacts of megatrends, customer shifts, and value creation. CLOs have a critical role to play in enabling and accelerating reinvention and digitisation across the organisation.

CLOs can take the lead in several areas including:

- Innovation and digital transformation: driving the adoption of new technologies, fostering a culture of innovation, and ensuring the organisation stays ahead of industry trends.
- Corporate governance: advising the board on strategic and legal issues, developing and implementing policies and frameworks, and engaging with key stakeholders on behalf of the company.
- Communication and reputation: crafting and delivering clear and consistent messages to internal and external audiences, building trust and credibility, and protecting and enhancing the company's brand and reputation.

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