

Recap: “BCLBE Leadership Lunch Talk: So You Want to be a General Counsel?”
By Luisa Scarpelli Costa, LL.M. Candidate 2018 | November 02, 2016

On October 30, 2017, the Berkeley Center for Law, Business and the Economy ([BCLBE](#)) welcomed Erika Rottenberg, a Boalt alumni who is on the board of both [Twilio](#), a leading cloud based communications platform, and [Wix.com](#), a leading cloud based development platform, for a talk and Q&A with the law students regarding the practice of law as a general counsel, what a general counsel does, and the differences between being a general counsel and an in-house lawyer.

Besides being on the board of two companies, Mrs. Rottenberg is also a mentor to women, executives, young professionals and students, and advises companies that are scaling globally, particularly in matters evolving global privacy, data security and corporate arenas. Beforehand, she was a very successful general counsel at LinkedIn, and also served as a Consultant of SumTotal Systems and as Vice President of Strategic Development and General Counsel at Creative Labs Inc. During the beginning of her career, she was an attorney at Cooley Godward, practicing corporate and employment law.

When asked about how she became a general counsel, she mentioned how it is almost the traditional path for law students to leave law school and go to work in law firms. She got a job in Cooley Godward straight after law school, but after a few years decided to change her career and go to work in-house in LinkedIn. Concerning this change, she mentioned how even though she did not have the knowledge in technology matters, she did not want to be just a lawyer at a firm, but rather be part of the business. For Mrs. Rottenberg, if you are a great in-house lawyer, you do not simply give legal advice, but rather become a business partner.

When talking about the difference of environment that is to work in a law firm and a big company, Mr. Rottenberg mentioned how in a law firm, the entire company revolves around the lawyers. On the other hand, on a company such LinkedIn, lawyers are on the expense side, and newcomers need to be aware of the necessity to be humble and accept that engineers and entrepreneurs will be much more on the center of the company’s attention.

Mr. Rottenberg also advised on how it is crucial for lawyers building their careers to always say yes to a project, and to take advantage of any opportunity to rotate around several areas of law. Furthermore, she talked extensively on how important it is for law students and young professionals to know how to make requests and how to be insistent in the appropriate manner in order to achieve their goals. Additionally, she mentioned how young lawyers should not be afraid to apply for opportunities even if they don’t meet the minimum requirements for the

position, because what the hiring part is actually looking for is someone who will be productive and helpful.