

New BarkerGilmore Research Reveals How CHROs Define High-Performing General Counsel

The General Counsel Through the CHRO Lens explores leadership expectations, executive partnership, and enterprise impact

PITTSFORD, NY, UNITED STATES, June 10, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [BarkerGilmore](#), the premier boutique in-house legal executive search firm, today announced the release of its latest research report, [The General Counsel Through the CHRO Lens: Insights on Leadership, Partnership, and Enterprise Impact](#).

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John Gilmore, Managing Partner

The report draws on insights from Chief Human Resources Officers (CHROs) to examine how the General Counsel (GC) role is evolving and where organizations are not yet fully realizing its strategic potential.

The General Counsel as an Enterprise Leader
The research confirms a clear shift in expectations for General Counsel. CHROs consistently identify leadership

attributes, rather than technical legal expertise, as the defining characteristics of top-performing GCs. Emotional intelligence and executive presence (68%) and the ability to influence without authority (64%) rank as the most critical differentiators.

“The role has evolved far beyond technical legal oversight,” said Managing Partner, John Gilmore. “CHROs increasingly expect General Counsel to operate as enterprise leaders who shape culture, influence strategy, and strengthen executive team performance.”

The findings reinforce broader trends BarkerGilmore continues to observe through its General Counsel executive search and leadership advisory work. High-performing General Counsel are viewed as key drivers of enterprise outcomes, including protecting the organization, shaping culture and leadership standards, strengthening board confidence, and enabling strategic growth.

A Strong but Inconsistently Executed Partnership

While the relationship between CHROs and General Counsel is broadly viewed as strong, it is not consistently embedded in ongoing enterprise leadership. Approximately half of CHROs describe the partnership as a strategic peer relationship, while many report that engagement remains primarily issue-based.

Although alignment between the two roles is high, it is not always sustained through regular, proactive collaboration on enterprise strategy.

Untapped Potential as a Performance Lever

The report highlights a significant opportunity for organizations to more fully leverage the General Counsel as a driver of executive team performance. While nearly two-thirds of CHROs report high levels of GC influence, only a small percentage view the role as a top-tier contributor to overall executive effectiveness.

The findings suggest many organizations continue to underutilize the General Counsel as a strategic leadership asset.

Leadership Gaps and Development Constraints

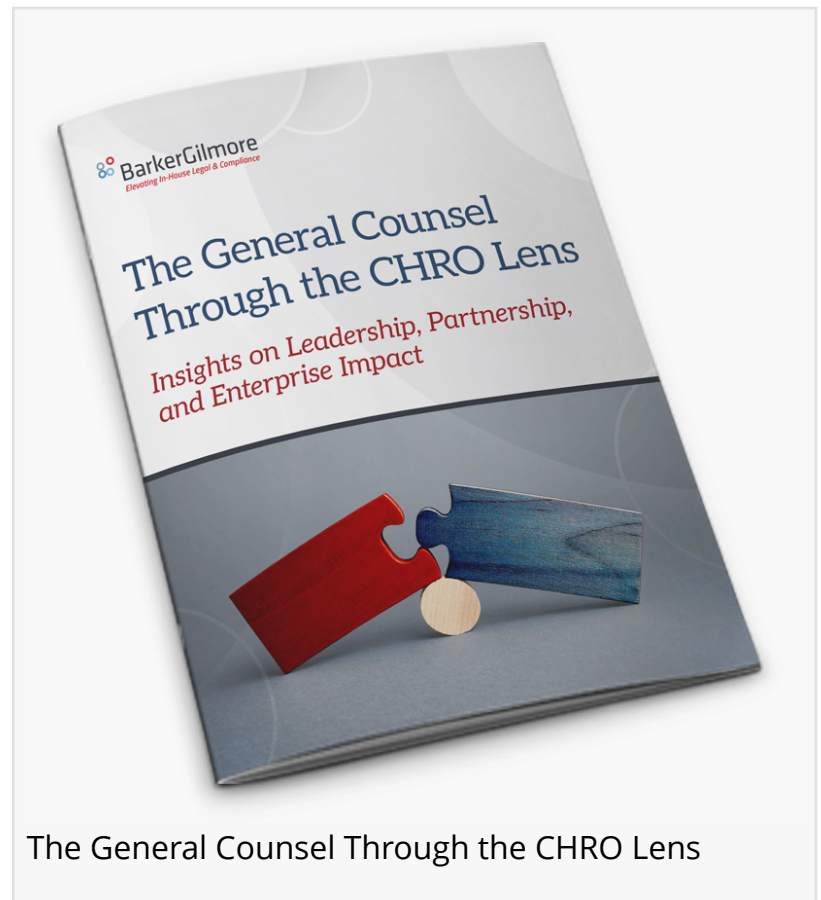
Several leadership gaps continue to limit GC effectiveness. The most cited include lack of business acumen or enterprise mindset (36%), overly risk-averse or compliance-first thinking (18%), and leadership development gaps (18%).

The report also identifies a “thin leadership bench,” with inconsistent succession planning and limited investment in structured leadership development for future General Counsel. Many organizations lack ready successors within a 12–24-month timeframe.

Defining Behaviors of High-Impact General Counsel

The research points to a clear set of behaviors that distinguish the most effective General Counsel. These include operating as a collaborative enterprise partner, balancing risk with business enablement, delivering proactive strategic guidance, and maintaining consistent alignment with executive leadership.

The findings reinforce that the General Counsel role is no longer defined solely by legal expertise. Its impact is determined by leadership capability, integration into the executive team,



and the ability to drive enterprise performance.

[Access the Full Report](#)

To gain access to the complete report and learn more about BarkerGilmore's legal executive search and advisory services, download The General Counsel Through the CHRO Lens.

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