

# Ethics under pressure

## A defining challenge for legal leaders

June 2026



We were delighted to sponsor and introduce one of the most popular sessions at the recent Association of Corporate Counsel Europe Annual Conference in Copenhagen, which brought together leading voices from across the legal community to explore how ethical decision making stands up under real pressure.

The session was led by Andrea Moretti, Legal Director at eBay, alongside Casper Munch, Head of Legal and Vice President at Maersk and Alice Flacco, Group General Counsel at MicroPort Scientific MedTech Corp. Together, they led a highly engaging and interactive discussion that encouraged participants to look beyond theory and confront the realities of complex ethical dilemmas in practice.

Drawing on their experience across technology, global logistics and healthcare, the speakers shaped a conversation that reflected the growing complexity of modern legal roles. Participants were invited to test their judgement against real world scenarios, share perspectives and explore practical ways to identify risks, as well as escalate concerns and act with integrity when pressures increase.

What emerged from the session was a clear and timely message. **Ethics under pressure is becoming one of the defining challenges for organisations today.** When legal, ethical, commercial and human considerations do not align, in-house lawyers are increasingly required to guide decisions where there is no clear answer.

Ethical challenges rarely present themselves as simple questions of right and wrong. They arise in situations where legal compliance may be clear, but the outcome feels uncomfortable, where commercial priorities conflict with wider human impact, and where decisions must be made quickly with incomplete information. In these moments, being legally correct does not resolve the issue. It is only the starting point.

The role of legal leaders is continuing to evolve. Legal teams are no longer focused solely on compliance. They are increasingly expected to contribute to decisions that reflect organisational values, as well as long-term risks and consequences.

This requires the ability to recognise when an issue becomes ethical rather than purely legal, the confidence to challenge senior stakeholders, the judgement to balance competing interests and the courage to speak up when needed.

The discussion brought these challenges to life through real world scenarios and raised important questions about whether compliance alone is enough when outcomes are not equal.

Another example explored the tension between global company standards and local practices. This highlighted the challenge of deciding whether ethical standards should be consistent across all locations or adapted to local realities.

Across industries, a consistent pattern emerged. Ethical decisions are often made under pressure, with limited time, incomplete information and competing priorities that all have merit. There is rarely an option that is without risk. In these situations, success is not about finding a perfect answer, but about making a decision that is considered, transparent and aligned with organisational values.

The session closed with a reflection that captures the essence of the challenge. When does being legally right stop being enough. This question continues to resonate as organisations navigate an increasingly complex and high pressure environment.

### Key takeaways

- 1 Legal compliance alone is not enough. It provides a foundation, but ethical judgement must guide the final decision.
- 2 The role of legal teams is expanding. Legal leaders are expected to influence strategy and act as ethical advisors.
- 3 Most real world decisions involve trade-offs. Leaders must balance competing priorities rather than look for perfect solutions.
- 4 Transparency and accountability are essential. Decisions should be clearly reasoned and capable of being explained.
- 5 Courage is a critical leadership skill. Speaking up and remaining aligned to values is vital under pressure.

## Contacts

To find out how we can support you in navigating complex ethical challenges, please get in touch.



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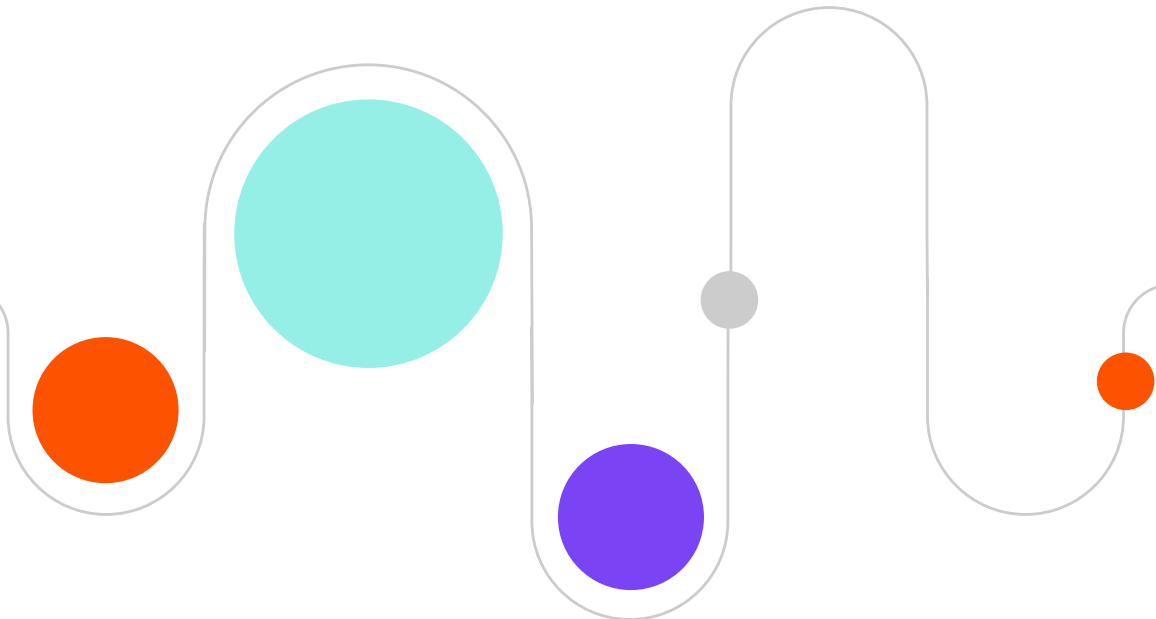
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