

Legal Strategy

An Interview with Irene M. Koch,
Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer,
Hospital for Special Surgery



Irene M. Koch

EDITORS' NOTE Irene Koch has held her current post since April 2015. Before this, she was Executive Vice President and General Counsel for Healthix. She has also been Executive Director for Brooklyn Health Information Exchange, Deputy Counsel, Health Information Technology and Associate General Counsel for Maimonides Medical Center, Associate Counsel for NYS Department of Health, and Associate Attorney with Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP. She received her J.D. from Fordham University School of Law and her B.A. in Biology and Society from Cornell University.

How do you define the role of Chief Legal Officer in an organization such as HSS?

The role of CLO at HSS involves tending to the past, present, and future of the organization. Part of the work arises from prior HSS operations, transactions, and commitments that require follow-up action and vigilance. The CLO is involved in practically all aspects of the organization's day-to-day activities through advising internal clients about legal and regulatory matters and working with staff to promote compliance and minimize risk. A sizable part of the role involves planning ahead, keeping abreast of developments and anticipated changes in applicable laws and regulations, and providing support for future strategic opportunities.

What are the key issues that you address when it comes to HSS' business?

HSS is a very complex organization and presents a wide variety of legal, regulatory, compliance, and risk-management issues in an ever-changing landscape. With increased reliance on information technology, a great deal of focus is spent on issues related to technology, privacy, and security. Our core business centers on hospital operations and research, so a significant portion of our work is on issues related to those areas. As the healthcare environment evolves, novel legal and regulatory issues emerge with respect to new business and expansion opportunities. Recently, we have been working on several international matters that require analysis of applicable legal parameters in new jurisdictions.

What excited you about the opportunity to join HSS in this role and made you feel that it was the right fit?

Having most recently spent time in my career building and operating a health information exchange – an exciting and innovative solution to sharing data in support of improving coordination of care – I was adamant that my next opportunity should similarly be in a fast-paced, challenging environment, amidst a talented, creative, and energetic team. Having also had a background in various aspects of healthcare law, I was interested in utilizing my professional background in a leadership role. The position of CLO at HSS seemed like the perfect fit for working with world-class talent, innovative ideas, and high-level issues and challenges.

Would you discuss the strength of your team in the legal area for HSS?

I was very lucky that my predecessor put together an incredibly talented, ethical, energetic, and cohesive group of individuals in the Legal and Risk Management Departments. Each of the attorneys in the Legal Department has expertise in several areas of healthcare law. Similarly, the Risk Management team is knowledgeable and personable, and well-respected at HSS. I'm gratified we have continued to operate in a trusting and supportive environment that encourages teamwork. Everyone feels comfortable sharing ideas on a regular basis and consulting with one another as necessary. ●

Bringing People and Ideas Together

An Interview with Robin Merle,
Senior Vice President and Chief Development Officer,
Hospital for Special Surgery



Robin Merle

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to joining HSS, Robin Merle raised significant support for New York University, and Rutgers University, where she received the Council for Advancement of Secondary Education Award for Excellence in Educational Fundraising Leadership. She is a Member of the Executive Committee of Women in Development, New York and served as Vice Chair of the 20th Anniversary Committee of the New York Women's Agenda. She founded and co-chairs a Senior Executive Leadership Group for development professionals in the New York and Connecticut area. Merle has a master's degree from The Johns Hopkins University and graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Rutgers College.

How do you define the role of the Chief Development Officer and what interested you in this type of work?

The Chief Development Officer has a unique leadership role in an organization. We are at the juncture of internal and external communities that, when brought together, have the power to change the capabilities of an organization and every constituent touched by that organization. Put more simply: we bring people and ideas together. Our role enables philanthropists and organizational leaders to realize their vision for the future.

We're connectors, educators, facilitators, strategists, problem-solvers, catalysts, psychologists, friends, stewards, advocates, and above all communicators with a talent for relationship-building for a purpose.

When I walk through the HSS campus I see basic science research laboratories that would not have been built if it weren't for our partnership with philanthropists. I see the children's pavilion that is now a "hospital within our hospital" thanks to a benefactor and physician leader who took the first step, and the ever-increasing community of supporters who followed, contributing \$40 million to build, endow, and staff the Pavilion. I am humbled by the research being conducted in our new genomics center, the result of a visionary philanthropist, trustee advocate, and our chief scientist officer and his team. We are the first and only research entity in the country to apply genomics to orthopedic problems.

What attracted you to this kind of work?

My team and I are mission-driven, goal-driven, and make-a-difference driven, not unlike the philanthropists with whom we are honored to partner. Anyone who has experienced the thrill of bringing to fruition ideas, values, and aspirations of great minds and prominent leaders knows firsthand the compelling rewards of development. To be able to do this work at Hospital for Special Surgery, the world's leading specialty hospital in orthopedics and rheumatology, which is an organization that sets the standard in its field, is an extraordinary opportunity. Our goals are driven by our patients: to improve their quality of life. Our current fund-raising campaign, "Your Life, Our Mission," takes this goal as its headline and has inspired and motivated donors from around the world.

Would you provide an overview of the Development Department at HSS and the quality and talent of your team?

We are a high-performance development team, staffed by 30 professionals and growing. We have designed and executed strategic, cost-effective fund-raising programs that reach a diverse portfolio of benefactors including individuals, foundations, organizations, and corporations. We are donor-centric, and focus on engagement and involvement in our organization, leading to the desire to provide meaningful support. We raise approximately \$50 million annually and have raised nearly half a billion in institutional campaigns focused on supporting musculoskeletal research, capital expansion, and endowment. This year, we were recognized as a "High Performer" organization by the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy for the second year in a row. ●