

Mark LeHocky, Vice President, General Counsel, and Secretary of Dreyer's Grand Ice Cream Holdings, Inc., Oakland, CA

GCC Profile

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By Jen Woods

Mark LeHocky made a career-altering decision when he decided to apply to law school just weeks before the application deadline.

LeHocky, now the Vice President, General Counsel, and Secretary of Dreyer's Grand Ice Cream Holdings, Inc., originally planned to earn his graduate degree in political science.

However, he changed his mind after taking a class on constitutional law at the University of California, Berkeley, Boalt

Hall School of Law. "I just loved the course," he said. Also, his college mentors thought political science would be a "more limiting career," he said.



LeHocky, who has served as the Dreyer's general counsel for six years, began working for the company as an outside litigations counsel. He was first hired to defend Dreyer's in an antitrust lawsuit, and after a successful outcome, he continued to work as an outside counsel for three years. Then, after successfully handling a major crisis for Dreyer's, "they asked me to come in and be their general counsel," LeHocky said.

Advice to Young Lawyers

"In order to be successful, lawyers must be "able to understand and evaluate risk appropriately," LeHocky said. "Lawyers sometimes get too focused on creating a risk-free environment." Instead, they should learn how to "get comfortable with risk as a company," he explained.

A certain amount of risk is unavoidable, and it's not always a bad thing, said LeHocky. He added, "The things that don't kill you make you stronger." LeHocky, who has been exposed to private practice, said he thinks "some lawyers have too much of a Chicken Little mentality." They seem to think "the sky is falling all the time." However, few problems are actually very big problems. "You just have to figure out how to work through them."

LeHocky's main responsibilities include managing the office administration, supervising outside counsel, and developing strategies to handle all major disputes. He frequently handles acquisitions, large-scale disputes, and international transactions, as well as public policy, antitrust, and employee-related issues. "Since we're in the food business, there are a lot of issues relating to food safety," LeHocky said.

LeHocky has learned to expect the unexpected when it comes to work. "It's just on any given day you run into virtually everything," he said, adding, "Almost everything is out of the ordinary. There's such a broad array of work that you encounter with a large company, especially one that is very, very large in size and has operations throughout the world."

Dreyer's, marketed under the Edy's brand name east of the Rockies, is the country's largest manufacturer and distributor of ice cream and frozen dairy products, with about \$2.4 billion in annual revenue and more than 6,000

employees. Dreyer's products, including Euy's, Nestlé, Haagen-Dazs, and Skinny Cow products, are sold all around the world.

Large-scale international companies like Dreyer's are often involved in major legal disputes and transactions. LeHocky has been a part of several significant legal issues. For instance, he negotiated the Dreyer's merger with Nestlé, S.A., the world's largest food company, and he also oversaw the \$71 million stock acquisition of Silhouette Brands, Inc., a frozen dessert snack company. Altogether, LeHocky has managed the successful prosecution and defense of intellectual property, antitrust, franchise, contract, and employment actions resulting in more than \$40 million in recoveries and avoided liabilities.

Since in-house attorneys are susceptible to their companies' overall well-being, they have vested interests in their economic success. Therefore, the ultimate goals of the company must be taken into account when handling each and every legal issue. "I think it's really, really important to focus on the big picture at all times," LeHocky said. In-house attorneys must consider the impact different legal situations will have on the company as a whole, he said. "It's kind of like seeing the forest or seeing the trees," he added.

LeHocky is also an appointed mediator for federal antitrust, intellectual property, and commercial litigation for the United States District Court of Northern California. The problem-solving and negotiation skills he uses as a mediator have also been essential in his current position as General Counsel, he said.

LeHocky is on the Board of Directors for the University of California, Berkeley, Boalt Hall School of Law Alumni Association. He is also a former member of the executive council of the antitrust and unfair competition section of the State Bar

of California and a former president of the Orinda Youth Association. He has taught law courses at the Golden Gate University School of Law and the University of California, Hastings, School of Law.

On the Net

Dreyer's Grand Ice Cream Holdings, Inc.

www.dreyers.com/main/index.asp?b=104

University of California, Berkeley (Boalt Hall) School of Law

www.law.berkeley.edu

The State Bar of California

www.calbar.ca.gov/state/calbar/calbar_home.jsp