

A BarkerGilmore 20th Anniversary Executive Profile

Interview conducted by John Gilmore, Managing Partner



Douglas Wolfson



General Counsel
CommerceHub

“Take the call. Have an open mind.”

Douglas Wolfson’s path to the General Counsel role at CommerceHub began with a simple decision to listen.

“Take the call,” Wolfson says. “Have an open mind, no matter where you are in your career.”

At the time, Wolfson held a successful role within a large multinational organization. The position offered stability, strong compensation, and a respected platform. Advancement, however, had effectively plateaued.

A choice emerged. Stay in a well-established role with limited upward mobility or pursue something less certain with greater potential.

“I could stay where I was, very comfortable, highly regarded, and accept that as my career,” he explains. “Or take an action to change it.”

As part of BarkerGilmore’s 20th anniversary, the firm is reconnecting with former placements like Wolfson whose careers reflect the impact of decisive moments.

Taking a Calculated Risk

The opportunity introduced by BarkerGilmore did not present as an obvious next step. CommerceHub was a relatively small, founder-led company based in Albany, New York. Wolfson approached the situation with careful consideration. Geography, family timing, and long-term career trajectory all factored into the decision.

A single visit to meet the founders shifted the equation.

“On the strength of one day meeting the team and understanding what they were building, I thought, this has real potential,” he recalls.

Initial expectations were modest. Wolfson anticipated a short tenure that would provide General Counsel experience before returning to a larger market. The outcome proved far different.

More than a decade later, the move remains the most significant growth experience of his career.

Operating in Complexity

CommerceHub's structure presented an immediate learning curve. The business operated as a private company within a larger public company framework, requiring navigation across multiple governance environments.

The role demanded versatility. Wolfson describes the need for what his CEO at the time referred to as "helicopter skills," moving seamlessly between detailed execution and executive-level engagement.

"You need to go deep in the weeds one minute and be credible in a boardroom the next," he explains.

That range became essential as the company evolved through multiple ownership changes, transactions, and strategic shifts. Wolfson played a central role across multiple exit events and transformative M&A transactions, contributing to sustained value creation while adapting to each new phase of the business.

Earning the General Counsel Seat

Securing the General Counsel title at the outset required conviction and a willingness to advocate directly. Wolfson initially walked away from the opportunity when the company declined to offer the title. The role did not align with his long-term objectives without it.

Rather than accept the outcome, he made a final case.

"I wrote them a note explaining why the title mattered and how it would make me more effective for the business," he recalls.

The message resonated. Leadership reconsidered, ultimately extending the General Counsel title and reopening the opportunity.

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The moment illustrates a broader principle. Strong candidates understand their value and communicate it clearly, particularly when alignment exists on both sides.

Building Trust and Influence

Early success in the role required more than legal expertise. CommerceHub's CEO came from a sales background and initially viewed legal as a constraint on the business. Trust developed over time through practical, business-oriented guidance.

"You want to be the person the business cannot operate without," Wolfson explains.

A focus on enabling outcomes rather than identifying risk shifted perception. Over time, legal became a strategic partner in decision-making rather than a reactive function.

The relationship evolved into one of the strongest professional partnerships of Wolfson's career.

Perspective on Career Growth

Wolfson's advice to aspiring General Counsel centers on mindset and positioning. Technical legal skill remains necessary, but not sufficient.

"You have to act like an owner, not a lawyer," he says.

Ownership thinking requires understanding the business, anticipating challenges, and offering clear recommendations rather than presenting risk in isolation. Generalist experience also plays a critical role. Early exposure to a wide range of legal and business issues builds the judgment required for enterprise leadership.

Equally important is comfort with accountability. "When the buck stops with you, there is no safety net," Wolfson notes. Confidence develops over time, but responsibility arrives immediately.

Leading and Developing Talent

Wolfson applies a distinctive philosophy to team development. Growth, not retention, serves as the primary objective.

"If someone leaves for a lateral role, I have failed as a manager," he explains.

Team members are encouraged to build new skills each year, increasing both internal effectiveness and external marketability. The approach creates an environment focused on development, trust, and long-term career progression.

An unexpected outcome follows. When growth is prioritized, retention improves naturally.

A Partnership Build on Insight

Wolfson's initial interaction with BarkerGilmore differed from typical recruiter outreach. The conversation focused on impact, leadership, and long-term opportunity rather than transactional elements.

"You spoke to me about what mattered to me," he recalls.

That alignment reframed the opportunity and created a foundation for a career-defining decision. Looking back, the outcome speaks clearly.

"It changed my life," Wolfson says.

Closing Perspective

Douglas Wolfson's career reflects the qualities organizations seek in a modern General Counsel: business judgment, adaptability, and the ability to lead through complexity.

For BarkerGilmore, his trajectory reinforces a consistent philosophy developed over two decades. Strong alignment, thoughtful assessment, and a focus on long-term success continue to define the firm's approach.

A Partner in Leadership

At BarkerGilmore, we believe the right leadership decisions shape organizations for years to come. For over twenty years, we have advised clients and candidates with a focus on fit, readiness, and enduring partnership. Learn more about our work and access additional resources on [our website](#), or reach us directly at [877.571.5047](tel:877.571.5047) or info@barkergilmore.com.