

2022

THE AMERICAN LAWYER

# TRAILBLAZERS

MIDWEST

CRAIG R. CULBERTSON  
BLANK ROME LLP



**What was the genesis of the idea/path that has made you a trailblazer?**

Craig Culbertson's 42-year legal career has spanned Jenner & Block (Executive Committee member, Corporate/Finance Department co-chair), McGuire Woods (Executive Committee member, Chicago Office Managing Partner), and Blank Rome (Partner). Since the 1990s, Craig also has been directly employed as General Counsel of some of these firms' clients. At first, Craig was one of few firm partners in this dual role, a practice that has since become more frequent.

**What sort of change has resulted from the concept?**

A law firm partner also serving as a client's General Counsel benefits the client: it allows for integration into the client's senior management. In Craig's case, he became part of the company-clients' ongoing senior management teams, and became deeply involved in long-term strategy and operational aspects of each client's businesses. Such integration would have been very difficult, if not impossible, without the formalized dual role, through which the clients employed and enjoyed the committed services of the General Counsel they most wanted – Craig – who could also continue his role as a senior partner in the law firm with other, "non-dual" client relationships.

**What bearing will this have on the future?**

Craig would tell you today that this "dual" role is not for every attorney and not for every law firm or company client. The position requires an attorney who is high-energy, committed, and perfectly comfortable continually "changing hats." The company client must have a high comfort level with the attorney's integrity and commitment, since the attorney will have other clients. And the law firm must be comfortable and flexible with such matters as compensation, since the attorney will not, in most cases, bill the client for his or her time worked, but will instead be directly compensated by the client.