



NICOLE OLSMAN

Legal, delivery, sustainability

Nicole Olsman, chief legal officer and head of sustainability at Linxon, explains why legal sits at the centre of project delivery – and how her team is navigating geopolitical instability, supply chain volatility and rising governance demands

by flavio caci

When **Nicole Olsman** describes her workday at Linxon's headquarters in Baden — where she serves as chief legal officer (CLO) and head of sustainability — she begins with the company's business model. Linxon operates in the highly specific Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) space, acting as contractor on large-scale AC power substation projects.

From there, her premise is clear: any legal task the team faces is inseparable from project execution. «Legal,» she remarks, «only functions when it accurately mirrors the company's project delivery».

In conversation with *MAG*, Olsman outlines the global challenges Linxon's legal team is currently navigating — from geopolitical instability to supply chain volatility and evolving regulatory standards.

A LINEUP IN EXPANSION

Nicole Olsman's principle — that projects are the reference point for legal work — finds immediate practical application in the structure of her team.

Linxon's legal core, closely tied to the geography of project execution, branches into three hubs: North America, Europe, and Asia, Middle East and Africa. From each hub, a legal lead reports to Olsman and manages a dedicated team.

«I'm very selective and risk-driven in deciding how to integrate new expertise»

Outside this hub structure, the legal team also includes two corporate roles, overseeing compliance and integrity, and legal operations and data, respectively.

«I cannot build a massive lineup,» Olsman explains, «so I'm very selective and risk-driven in deciding how to integrate new expertise.» The latest additions, in that sense, relates to the company's Global Engineering, Technology and Services (GETS) team in Chennai, India, opened in June 2024, and also, to the hire of a new lawyer in London to manage legal operations part-time.

Over the past few years, Olsman has been working to develop legal expertise in Linxon's Indian



LIXON'S LEGAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

base office and, in 2026, added a new role overseeing legal operations, data, and financing. «We're going to be adding more,» she predicts. «The idea at our Indian centre in Chennai is to support project lawyers if they experience overflow, but also to bolster our team from a corporate and legal operations perspective, given the growing and evolving corporate requirements we need to keep up with».

Originally, the CLO did not anticipate dedicating specific resources to corporate matters, «because of our clearly defined identity as a project-driven company». «As we're growing,» she continues, «I'm seeing the need for clear global governance, which is what makes new corporate additions instrumental».

For Olsman, the priority is to keep building from within, relying on external counsel only in specific circumstances, such as large dispute resolution cases, complex tax matters, and local regulatory issues. «I consider my in-house team to be instrumental in providing business context to each legal issue,» she says.

At Linxon, all core EPC contracts are handled in-house, as are negotiation strategy, bid risk reviews, commercial approvals, live project legal support, compliance programmes, internal investigations, and triage. «We want to keep it internal because these activities are highly commercial and specific to the business».

That emphasis on specificity also underpins the CLO's approach to adopting AI tools. »From a legal perspective,» she explains, »we want to ensure that we use AI only to increase speed of execution, never to replace legal judgment. Because we operate in such a bespoke environment, our EPC contracts still require a significant degree of personal review and input».

GLOBAL CHALLENGES

«In our industry,» Nicole Olsman explains, «legal work is a constant exercise in managing change».

Over the lifecycle of a single project, she can point to a long list of variables that directly affect the legal function: changes in scope, shifts in the physical landscape where Linxon is

«Legal has the potential to make sustainability executable»

contracted, or modifications to the rely-upon information provided by the project owner. «These are all aspects that we, as a legal team, need to understand meticulously and respond to». Another key factor is supply chain volatility, an increasingly visible global trend. In 2025, McKinsey reported that, to meet the demands of population growth and enable rapid technological advancement, the world will require an estimated \$106 trillion in infrastructure investment by 2040.

«Given the global increase in infrastructure requirements,» Olsman says, «lead times for certain types of equipment can become quite long. Part of the legal team's role is to help structure supply contracts and upstream client contracts in a way that ensures delivery is not only on time, but also at the agreed price».

For an EPC contractor, all operations are subject to stringent health, safety and environmental (HSE) obligations — areas in which the legal function plays a role, particularly in today's geopolitical climate. «Because we're a globally active company,» the CLO explains, «our legal work involves navigating a wide range of international standards. Given the current instability, this becomes even more complex».

Beyond traditional legal risks — such as claims and disputes within standard litigation — Olsman highlights how sustainability regulations and geopolitical risks are emerging as interconnected challenges.



LINXON GLOBAL ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND SERVICES (GETS) IN CHENNAI, INDIA

«In times of geopolitical instability,» she explains, «regulatory standards can become a moving target. Some of the standards we had been working towards are now being revisited».

Her remarks come as, at the end of February 2026, the European Council moved to simplify the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) through the Omnibus I package, citing a «constantly changing geopolitical framework» as one of the reasons for easing and delaying requirements.

MIXING SUSTAINABILITY WITH LEGAL

As the conversation draws to a close, Nicole Olsman reflects on how combining her role as CLO with leadership of the company's sustainability function has allowed her to connect

the dots between the two areas.

When she first took on the role of head of sustainability, it sat within the Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) function. «I initially saw it as separate from my role as a lawyer,» she recalls.

Over time, however, her two roles have increasingly converged, «because sustainability is now seen as a governance and risk discipline, not just a corporate objective».

«Holding both roles allows me to assess what we've committed to contractually alongside what we can deliver from a sustainability perspective, and to frame this as a forward-looking business risk rather than a mere reporting exercise». «Legal, Olsman concludes, «has the potential to make sustainability executable». 📌

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