

# TheTOP 40 Corporate Counsel: and Under 40

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## BRAINS, TALENT AND YOUTH.

Always have been and always will be a winning combination. And this group of 40 in-house corporate counsel, 40 years of age and under, has it all. Much like Yo-Yo Ma or Vanessa-Mae, they combine classical or historic interpretation with a contemporary approach. They defy stereotypes, rewriting in a fundamental sense their role and career descriptions and adapting to an increasingly slippery and complex corporate and regulatory slope.

They travel to film festivals in Cannes and petrochemical projects in the Middle East. They interact with a wide range of successful individuals ranging from CEOs to rock stars and movie idols to futuristic car designers. They work on billion dollar oil sands developments, design new financial products and quarterback the acquisition and disposition of assets worth hundreds of millions of dollars across multiple industry sectors. Importantly, they appear to possess an unassuming, almost naive sense of self that is free of conceit and arrogance, but brimming with enthusiasm for what they do.

This redefinition has not gone unnoticed. “The whole package has changed,” confirms Jim Riley, a senior corporate partner in the Toronto office of Ogilvy Renault LLP. Riley works closely with a number of the corporate counsel profiled in this article. “These people are not lawyers in the pure sense anymore. They are a unique hybrid that is part lawyer, part business leader and, in some cases, part entrepreneur.”

Riley points to Scott Bates at Royal Group Technologies as a good example of how the “whole package has changed.” Bates grew up in mid-town Toronto attending John Ross Robertson Public School before being streamed into the University of Toronto School, which only selects the most gifted students. As Bates recalls, his parents, an account broker and a teacher (there is a high incidence of teacher parents in this group), “fostered in me a strong desire to achieve.” They emphasized, as apparently did the parents of practically all members of our group of 40, several core values. These were the importance of education, a strong work ethic and doing your best to achieve.

Bates earned a joint LLB/MBA degree—also common among this group—prior to articling at Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP. He then worked at Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (BLG) to sharpen his skill set in corporate and securities law. “He is more than simply smart,” observes Riley. “Scott has this unique ability to discern and differentiate between what should be done in an ideal world and what can be done in the real world. He has also developed a valuable skill set for trouble shooting and acting as an intermediary between outside counsel, such as myself, and the business executives in

his organization. Further, he is one of the first individuals of his age group to build a truly effective general counsel group in his company.”

The significant corporate governance gains of Royal Group Technologies, as recently cited in *The Globe and Mail* (this year’s score up to 83 as compared to 62 last year), is but one indication of the influence Bates has had.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.** A “whole new package” indeed. On the surface they are a group of professionals who appear to have little in common. However, as one digs deeper a striking commonality of attributes surfaces, which unites them as extraordinary achievers. Our group of 40 legal/business professionals are world-class talent. Highlights include:

1. Their raw intelligence or IQ is in the 98th percentile of the general population (anywhere in the world). We are talking serious intelligence.
2. They are more conscientious, honest and ethical than 88 per cent of all other people. If their organizations are looking for trustworthiness and transparency, what they see is what they get with this group.
3. Their verbal fluency, a key skill for leadership, influencing and negotiating, is better than 82 per cent of others.
4. Their working memory, which enables them to hold thoughts and simultaneously attend to different tasks, is at the 80th percentile of the population.
5. They learn more quickly and can discern what is and is not relevant in a changing environment better than three quarters of other people (74th percentile).
6. Their adaptability, according to confidential assessments completed and their interaction with lawyers in private practice who were interviewed for purposes of this article, is one of the important attributes that set them apart.
7. Their creative potential, while high average (66th percentile), is their most significant challenge in