



Qurated Quarterly Legal Report

3rd ed.

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C-Suite Transformation Accelerates

The legal industry entered 2025 with renewed momentum, marked by significant executive turnover following a lacklustre end to 2024. The turn of the year saw substantial C-suite transformation as firms reinvigorated their business strategies and transformational agendas with one distinct trend emerging: the increasing strategic prominence of the Chief Operating Officer (COO) is redefining the power dynamics of the C-suite. Yet, whilst this paints a brighter future, today there continues to be reserving factors indicating firms want change but don't yet believe in it.

Our Q1 Executive moves report details a comprehensive oversight of all C-level Moves in the AmLaw and Global 50, assessing incomers and allowing us to analyze the mindset of firms as they evolve. In doing so, we invite you to consider; what does transformation really mean to a law firm?

The report dives into several key areas, from a holistic data overview, where we assess the influx in quarterly movement, deep-dive into specific roles, and question the mindset of the industry off the back of this whilst also breaking down the anatomy of change, and overall trends seen and foreseen.

This analysis is based on 150 C-suite interviews, over 800 data points, and publicly available information from 200 AmLaw firms, in addition to the Global 50.

Momentum Reignited:

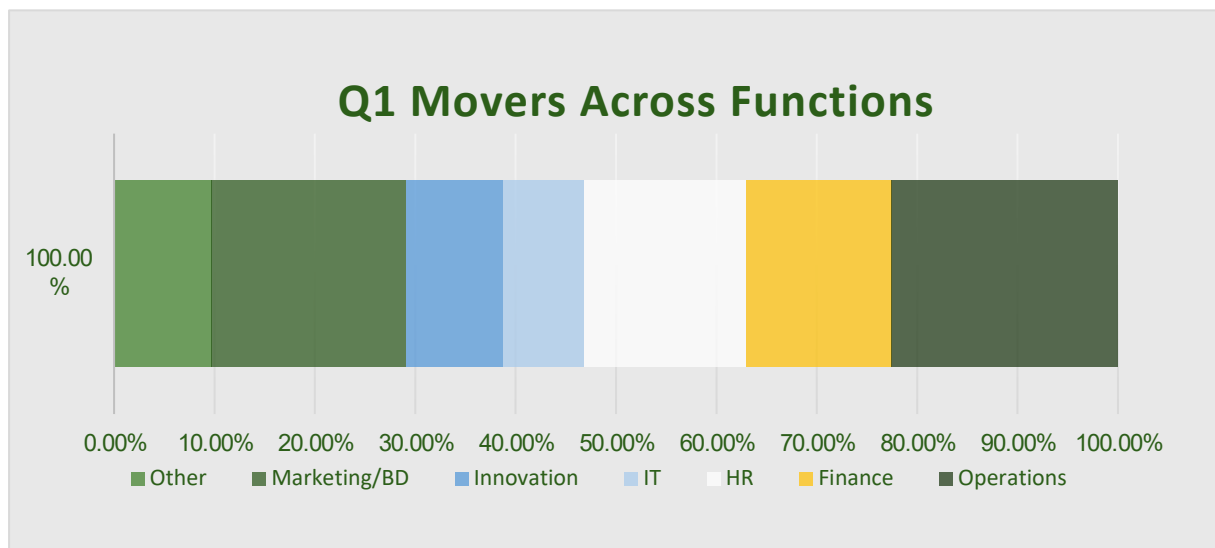
Strategic Appointments Signal a Broader Shift

Q1 2025 recorded 64 C-level appointments—a 52% increase over Q4 2024. The influx coincides with firms’ annual strategic resets, underscoring January as a pivotal month for leadership onboarding (69% of moves occurred during this month alone). These transitions reflect more than a cyclical refresh; they point to a structural shift in the legal industry’s executive mindset.

Like Q4, we saw dynamic changes to the industry, with a breadth of roles brought in, of which 52% of the roles introduced in Q1 were newly created, further validating firms’ readiness to invest in growth of or new business functions. Notably, Marketing, HR, and Operations accounted for the highest share of new roles, with Operations seeing a substantial rise. This signals a deeper investment in operational excellence, with implications

for target operating model (TOM) reform and enterprise-wide transformation. Perhaps surprising was the growth of Information Technology and Innovation covering only 3% and 12% respectively of all newly created position - in which we would typically expect to see increasing investment.

Q1 did see the introduction of bespoke roles including; Chief Resilience Officer, Chief Intake Officer, and the return of the Chief Strategy Officer title, which was brought into law firms on several occasions in 2024. The Resilience Officer position specifically aligns with the political and economic ambiguity of Q4 and underpins a consistent threat and concern of law firms - It’s no surprise to see this inclusion in Q1 from a major AmLaw 50 firm.



The Re-Emerging Role:

The COO as a Catalyst for C-Suite Realignment?

The increasing appointment of COOs reflects a broader recalibration of firm leadership. The COO is evolving from a tactical manager to a strategic partner—owning transformation, aligning execution with strategy, and guiding cross-functional coordination.

While prior predictions suggested a broader diversification of the C-suite, Q1 showed a more focused trend:

consolidation around high-impact operational roles. This underscores a firm-wide realization that sustained transformation demands leadership with deep structural authority and executional oversight—traits embodied by today's evolved COO role. We expect the increase of COO hiring to directly impact the growth of other C-suite areas over the course of 2025 and 2026.

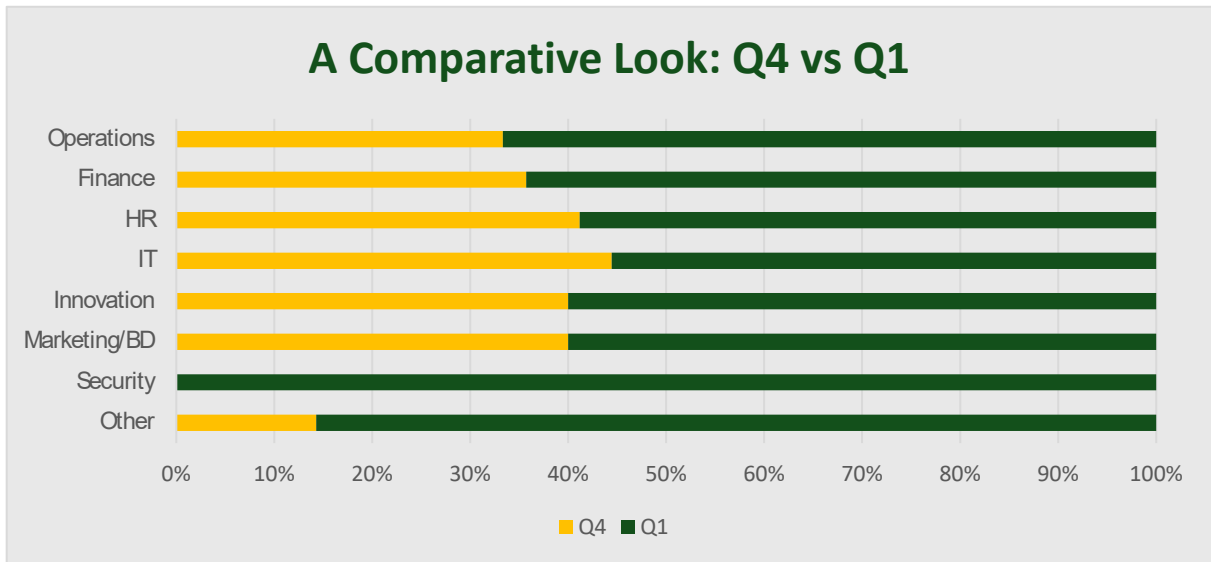
'It's no surprise to see the COO transformation, the industry is at a turning point and the COO hold's the keys to successful future evolution.'

Chief Operating Officer, Global 50



Comparative Momentum:

Q4 to Q1 Trends Underscore Selective Investment



All C-suite functions grew in Q1 compared to Q4, but the pace varied. HR and IT recorded the lowest growth rates—43% and 25%, respectively. While these figures may suggest stability, they also point to a cautious stance on IT investment, despite the buzz around AI, data, and digital innovation. It will be interesting to see how this evolves through 2025 and 2026.

The disconnect between strategic aspiration and actual hiring behavior was encapsulated by Chiefs across the industry during our conversations.

Until firms reconcile ambition with execution, operational roles—led by the COO—may continue to bear the weight of transformation.

'Firms want to be seen as pioneers in tech, but behind the scenes they remain as risk-averse as usual.'

Global Chief Data Analytics Officer, AmLaw 200 firm

The Anatomy of Change:

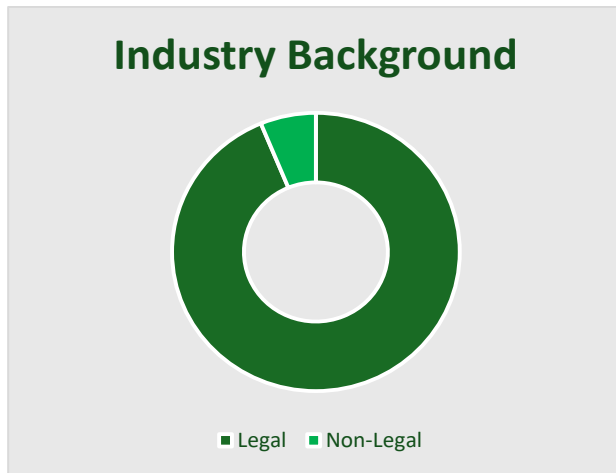
Talent Migration Patterns

Geographic Distribution:

30% of executive appointments were based in New York. Aside from California, no other region surpassed 8% of Q1 hires, reaffirming the dispersed post-COVID executive footprint. International hires remained modest at 6%, though global M&A and cross-border expansion persists. Over the last 18 months, we've seen significant acquisitions across the industry, including the recent Kramer Levin and Herbert Smith Freehills'

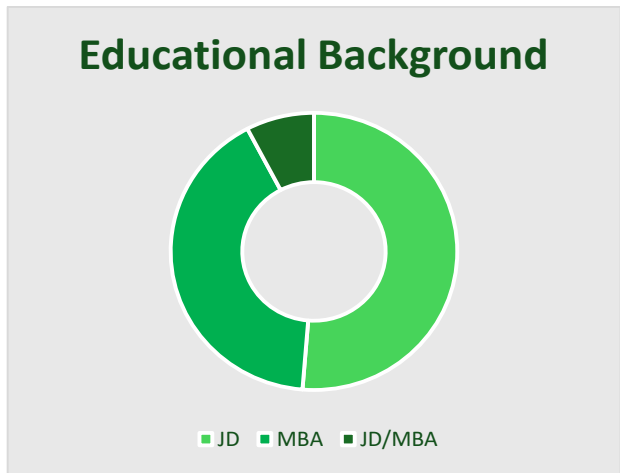
announcement, driving further US and international growth.

One significant trend is KPMG's recent announcement that they will be opening a law firm in Arizona, marking the first Big 4 accounting firm to be able to practice law in the USA. Will this continue to diversify locations of Executives should the Big 4 gain a foothold in the market?



Industry Background:

An overwhelming 94% of appointees came from within the legal sector, a notable pivot back to previous trends seen. The exception: 75% of out-of-industry hires came from consultancies, hinting at a strategic push to infuse law firms with more commercial acumen and a consultancy-style operating mindset. These firms all held a gross revenue of >\$1.5million, and we are yet to see considerable investment from small-mid law when it comes to harnessing a more commercial-operating model. It will be



interesting to see whether consultancy hiring increases.

Educational Credentials:

A Juris Doctorate (31%) narrowly edged out MBAs (25%) as the most common qualification, although COOs were most likely to hold one or both degrees (86% - Though only three had both qualifications). This reflects the increasingly complex nature of law firms, executive leadership, and the strategic imperative placed on these roles.

A Turning Point:

Gender Representation in Leadership

For the first time in over 12 months, female executives comprised the majority (53%) of C-suite moves. This was a result of a 5% increase to Q4 data, and 24% from Q3.

The pipeline for female leadership appears stronger than ever across Marketing, HR, and increasingly, Operations - highlighting significant growing gender parity at the highest levels of firm decision-making.

Marketing saw the greatest intake of Female Leadership, with 9 individuals moving. Whilst HR and Operations

also saw significant intake, with each equating to 18% of total Female movers in Q1.

This is an exciting development to see within an increasingly progressive industry and we hope to see this parity evolve into GC/Board level roles over the coming years.



Forward Outlook:

The C-Suite in 2025 and Beyond

Looking ahead, Qurated anticipates further elevation of the COO and adjacent operational roles. As firms sharpen focus on business transformation, investment will likely increase in Technology, Data, and Security functions—though only if firms overcome risk aversion.

A more mature approach to talent acquisition is also emerging, with a reform of industry norms and hiring policies, which have typically been slow and arduous across the industry. The demand for strategic HR leadership and executive search support at C-1 and C-2 levels is expected to rise, particularly as law firms aim to build internal capability in line with their transformation goals. As Search specialists, Qurated Network have seen this growth over the past 12 months, and are well positioned across the industry to continue supporting these firms to realize the potential a

dedicated search can have for talent acquisition.

As the industry evolves, transformation roadmaps and strategies are forced into re-evaluation. Fundamentally, this has impacted firm operating models with a requirement to invest and transform whilst remaining agile to change and industry evolution. We expect the need for operating model redesign, succession planning, and knowledge transfer to be significantly greater as the industry continues to grow. Qurated Network have been approached regarding these areas significantly over the past 12 months, predominantly within Technology and AI. If you're interested in this further, reach out to Qurated Network.

'Succession planning is an important initiative to ensure business continuity amidst exciting and ambiguous periods of change.'

Global Chief Information Officer, AmLaw 50 firm

Conclusion: From Reluctance to Resolve

Firms Embrace Strategic Operations

Q1 marks a pivotal point in legal industry transformation. While technology-driven functions have yet to see the scale of hiring one might expect, the surge in operational leadership signals a more grounded—but no less ambitious—transformation. The rise of the COO as a central figure in the modern law firm

suggests that the evolution of the C-suite is not just ongoing, but accelerating. As firms increasingly recognize the need for executional discipline and integrated leadership, the COO may well become the cornerstone of law firm strategy in the years ahead.

'We are seeing the industry evolve as new personalities and backgrounds move into the COO role, from out-of-industry talent to different business functions; marketers, lawyers, even Technologists.'

Managing Partner, AmLaw 75 firm





About us

Qurated Network is an Executive Search business operating across the USA and UK, specializing in supporting ambitious organizations to secure exceptional leaders and build high-performing teams.

Through an agile and consultative approach, we partner with clients focused on technology-driven transformation to help them scale expert teams and secure top leadership talent.



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