

## MLA IN-HOUSE COUNSEL RECRUITING CASE STUDY

# Building a Strategic Talent Partnership with a Global Quick Service Restaurant Company

### The Client:

Privately held,  
PE-backed Retail  
Conglomerate

### Industry:

Quick Service  
Restaurant

### Location:

U.S.

### Challenge

A PE firm, with multiple quick service restaurant (QSR) portfolio[RG1] companies, approached MLA in 2014 with an urgent need: **general counsel searches for two of its portfolio companies.**

The PE firm was experiencing significant growth for these two portfolio companies, marked by rapid brand acquisition and store expansion. Their challenges included:

- Recruiting GCs with **franchising expertise** and **public-company/IPO-readiness** experience
- Filling **two GC roles simultaneously**
- Later establishing a scalable legal function for a fast-growing, global operation, one of the portfolio companies

The company's PE owner selected MLA based on the firm's longstanding reputation with deeply experienced search consultants as the **leading legal-specialized search partner in the Southeast**, preferring MLA's depth of legal expertise over generalist executive search firms.

### Solution

MLA deployed a team-based, high-touch search model that evolved into a decade-long partnership.

#### 1. Delivering the Initial GC Searches

Two simultaneous GC searches were executed, split between senior MLA recruiters to ensure full attention and deep market coverage. Candidates were sourced for their combination of franchising, regulatory, and IPO-readiness skills.

#### 2. Building a High-Performing, Cost-Efficient Legal Department

Following the successful placement of the first GC, MLA became the client's long-term partner as one of the portfolio company's legal department expanded significantly. Support included:

- Strategic hiring of **junior attorneys (2–5 years)** and **staff attorneys** with strong cultural alignment
- Administering **skills and redline tests** for candidates to ensure functional fit
- Providing guidance that enabled the GC to build a lean, scalable team aligned with PE budget expectations

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Over ten years, MLA placed **12 attorneys** with the company, including initially the GC, then senior counsel, mid-level, and junior roles.

### Results

The impact of the partnership has been significant and long-lasting:

#### A Decade of Successful Recruiting

- **12 attorneys placed** across ten years
- Full lifecycle support from GC to junior attorney hiring

#### A Relationship That Continues to Expand

- Referral work to MLA's **Interim Legal Talent** and **Coaching** divisions
- Ongoing discussions with the departing GC's new company regarding future search needs
- Continued trust from the PE firm for executive-level legal placements across additional portfolio companies and the PE firm itself

### Summary

What began as an urgent request for two GC searches grew into a **10-year strategic talent partnership** between MLA and the portfolio company, a global QSR organization. MLA's legal-specialized expertise, team-based delivery model, and flexible support across permanent, interim, and coaching needs allowed the client to build a high-performing legal function that grew alongside its rapidly expanding business.

Today, MLA remains the company's trusted partner for legal hiring, and continues to support both the client and its PE owner as new talent needs emerge.