



2021 ACC Top 10 30-Something: Akshar Patel

Interviews and Profiles



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TOP 10
30-
somethings
2021



Akshar Patel

VP, AGC Corporate & Commercial,
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USA

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The importance of flow control, specifically in keeping the lights on and water flowing, is often overlooked. Modest puzzle pieces like valves, pumps, and seals have a profound impact on modern

life, says Akshar Patel, in-house counsel at [Flowserve Corporation](#), one of the largest industrial manufacturers of these essential parts that are at the heart of society's most critical civil services. The 200-year-old company has developed unsung innovations throughout its long history, including enabling modern indoor plumbing, developing innovative pumps in the Netherland dykes to prevent flooding, and, most recently, providing a critical part in producing a lifesaving COVID-19 vaccine.

Flowserve, with operations in over 50 countries, is an amalgamation of several companies — each with their own historical workflows. As vice president, AGC corporate & commercial, and assistant corporate secretary, Akshar oversees all corporate and commercial legal issues globally, and leads a team comprising over 25 lawyers and legal professionals.

He also recently implemented a Contract Lifecycle Management (CLM) solution to centralize processes, despite the challenges from COVID-19 and remote working. Even more impressive was accomplishing this goal on time and under budget.

Akshar attributes the success to his cross-departmental team. Each member was the expert in their subject area and knew the most about their piece of the jigsaw puzzle. It's advice a mentor taught him when he first began law: "Learn something new from everyone you meet." He admits, "It helps you stay grounded because no one can be the best at everything."

With his team's technical knowledge and vast expertise, they mapped out streamlined processes for thousands of employees in hundreds of sites across the world.

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The result was a seamless transition to an improved system, which created a central repository for all commercial contracts, enabling the business to make smarter decisions through advanced analytics and contract metrics.

Change-resistance didn't ensue, as his team assured staff that automation would simplify their jobs instead of taking them away, freeing up time to focus on higher value and more interesting work. At the onset of the project, the vendor praised the CLM requirements document as "the most comprehensive plan [they]’ve ever seen."

During the pandemic, to keep sites open and products flowing, Akshar co-led the legal department's COVID-19 task force to ensure that all facilities in 50 countries continued to operate as seamlessly as possible. Standardizing processes gave the business the tools it needed to quickly communicate issues and delays to customers while protecting the company's legal rights. "If you're the business partner who responds to an unforeseen challenge with empathy, you can really differentiate yourself," he advises. Enabling the business to continue operating during the pandemic helped return

the public to normalcy.

The most impressive is Flowserve's crucial role in [producing the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine](#). They created valves and seals to ensure the stability of the vaccine's temperature. Without these cogs, the vaccine rollout wouldn't have happened as quickly. "Each step of the way, there was a different problem to solve, and the entire world came together to address them. This is one of the problems that we could help solve and we are proud as a company to have been able to do our part," Akshar notes.

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Akshar earned his bachelor's degree in finance when he was 19 and graduated as valedictorian in his class. Rather than pursue an MBA that reiterated his undergraduate studies, he enrolled in law school for a different perspective on business, and after graduating with honors, he dove headfirst into a large law firm. There, he found that corporate law checked off all of the boxes. It was fitting, as he always knew he didn't want to do trial law — he wasn't argumentative as a child. On the contrary, he helped his father, an immigrant from the Gujarat region of India, build his small business.

There, he learned the basics of business and the value of hard work. In return, he has volunteered his legal advice to the Gujarati business community, many of whom work in the hotel industry. The COVID-19 recession hit the travel and hospitality industry especially hard. To keep their businesses alive, Akshar showed them how to use the Paycheck Protection Program and connected them with other professionals who could also help.

Akshar is relieved and proud he has helped the community during the pandemic. But his worries are now directed to the surging COVID-19 cases in India. Although he can't visit relatives there anytime soon, doses of the Pfizer vaccine are [reported to arrive in July](#). He can now find solace as a minor yet critical part in the recovery of his family's homeland.

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