

Celebrating In-House Women *“An equal world is an enabled world”*

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Lori with her daughter, Erin

What does International Women’s Day mean to you and is it important that we have one?

The saying goes, “Women hold up half the sky” and certainly at 50 percent of the population you might think there is no need for an International Women’s Day. However, the truth is that women are less acknowledged and less visible than men (and lower paid). Consider something as everyday as the overwhelming number of place and street names that recognise a man in Sydney (female monarchs notwithstanding, Lady Macquarie only got a chair!) – starting with the name of the city. We are lucky in Sydney that we are seeing change and more visibility for women in government, business, medicine, education, the law and sport – but even here we still need a day of recognition. We have had a single female Prime Minister in Australia– a friend once told me that it’s just an anomaly until there are two. Internationally, the need to recognise and celebrate the achievements and contributions of women is much greater. Even though women have made great strides in the law in Australia, the gains by women who are part of one or more of the differently-abled or LGBTI or ethnic communities have lagged. We especially need to hold up and celebrate these role models.

What are some of the great things about being a woman in law?

I practice in the employment law area and have my entire legal career. That area requires good observation and people skills, negotiation and understanding. My experience as a woman and as a mother come in very handy. Often the legal advice I give must consider what

I know and have observed about people and anticipating a reaction that is emotional and not legal. While there are great male employment lawyers, the specialty is female heavy because I think women lawyers often feel more comfortable advising in a more empathic, less black and white (some might say “squishier”) area of the law.

Why do you think there are less women in law?

I think that depends on the area of law - the percentage of women in-house in Australia is more than 50% and growing. The international team on which I work is predominantly female and Salesforce’s general counsel is a woman.

That said, of my law school class that was 50% women, many more women than men have left the law. Only a handful of the women who were associates with me continued to work in a law firm. The rest either left the law entirely or moved to in-house or government roles (two of my close cohort are now federal judges in the US). Law grad jobs in law firms can be very competitive and sometimes cut-throat. Time is still the measurement of success. There is an expectation that the new firm lawyer will put in the time and that can mean lots and lots of hours, both of legal work and business development. If the female lawyer is the “primary” carer and does not have a good support network, it can be very hard to balance kids and a traditional (law firm) legal career. Male firm lawyers take parental leave at lower rates, so this continues to disproportionately impact women. Women barristers are briefed at lower rates and for less “valuable” claims. This is changing, but slowly. As the NSW President of ACC, I encourage our members to read the ACC Australia Diversity and Inclusion Charter, which sets out ways that in-house departments can partner with law firms to increase and support gender diversity in our profession.

Based on your own experience, what advice would you give to women considering pursuing a career as an in-house lawyer?

The trade off from traditional law to in-house is a trade off from time spent doing business development to time invested in building relationships across the company. While in-house is generally more flexible, in terms of where and when work can be done, I think that to do it well you have to be ready to invest in those relationships and that takes time too. The advice an in-house lawyer gives gets better over time as the trust between the lawyer and the internal client builds. In-house lawyers also need to understand the business they are supporting, both the product their company sells and the operational structure. The advice in-house lawyers give has to consider what is realistic and practical, so it is important to be creative and to listen to the practical challenges the clients are facing. Rarely are in house lawyers asked whether something is legal or not. The questions I get require me to address how we can achieve our business goals while meeting both legal and ethical imperatives. As an effective in-house lawyer you have to understand what the company is trying to achieve both short and longer term, the image it seeks to project and its values and goals.

What is the driving force behind everything you do...what keeps you motivated and driven on an everyday basis?

I work for a company with more than 40,000 people worldwide, so the issues that arise in all the parts of the world are always going to be different. I’ve been doing labour and employment work for a long time and it has always stayed interesting. I will admit to

employment law geekdom, I like reading legal updates (which often contain salacious facts!), discussing them with my colleagues and thinking about how they could impact my future advice. I am intrigued by the cultural impact on the field and how quickly we can be asked to react. Ultimately, though, I need to be working for a company that aligns with my personal values, that expects me to give advice that is right and not just legal. I view my role as a guardian of culture – if we aren't doing the right thing by our employees then we aren't meeting our values. Salesforce puts a high value on trust – that makes it easy for me to come to work every day.

Who has been the biggest influence of your success?

My first in-house manager was a terrific role model. He shared childcare responsibilities with his wife and was always transparent with me and the team if he needed to leave to pick up kids or go to a school play or whatever. He gave us actual permission to be open and transparent as well. He is also a super nice guy and a great listener and asked terrific questions that meant he got the full story from our clients. He is my mentor to this day and when I'm in a quandary about an issue, I still ask myself, "what would Ted do?" or just give him a call.

Who are your female icons?

First, my mother. I was born two weeks after she graduated from medical school. She was brilliant and funny and the most generous person. She was so supportive of the women in her life, many of whom would never have gone to university and beyond if she hadn't badgered them into believing in themselves. One of her proudest moments was when she was given a lifetime medical achievement award which came with a personal note from Hillary Clinton. In terms of lawyers, I'd name US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg. I admire her patience and the way that she used incremental decisions to build a strong scaffold for change, that has stood the test of time.

How you define women empowerment?

Being able to be successful as a woman and not some female version of a man. What I mean is that women should be able to approach what they do authentically without having to mimic the actions of a male leader.

What message would you like to leave for both men and women on International Women's Day?

Both men and women should spend some time thinking about the influential women in their lives- mothers, friends, bosses and leaders- and talk about them at dinner tonight with their friends and families. It is really important for us to share these stories with the next generation. I'm currently reading the compilation of stories called "Courageous Women" by Hillary and Chelsea Clinton – recommend it highly! I think it is also a good time for women to remind ourselves that we need to lend a hand to those women coming along, especially those in underrepresented ethnic groups. I'm old enough to not have gotten a hand up from many women, but that doesn't mean I can't lend one. Mentoring is a great way to do that. ACC has a terrific mentoring program which I have participated in for a number of years.