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Episode Title: Taking your career to the top of the house

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Natalie Runyon: Hi, this is Natalie Runyon, one of your hosts. Welcome back to the show today. I'm excited to feature Bindu Dhaliwal, Ombudsperson of BMO Financial Group and member of the Transforming Women's Leadership Initiative at Thomson Reuters, which we affectionately refer to as TWLL. For this episode, Bindu interviewed three powerhouse Chief Legal officers as part of TWLL's video series entitled, "Top of the House Conversations with Chief Legal officer's Career Inflection Points". On behalf of TWLL, Bindu celebrates the success of these women as they advance to the top of the house. Bindu is going to take it from here with her first chat with Caroline Tsai, Chief Legal officer at Western Union.

Bindu Dhaliwal: And on this note, I have the pleasure today of speaking to Caroline Tsai. Caroline is the Chief Legal Officer and Corporate Secretary of the Western Union Company. In this role, Caroline leads a global team spanning over 50 countries leading legal, enterprise and public policy and also having oversight over compliance and information security. Caroline, welcome.

Caroline Tsai: Thank you, Bindu.

Bindu Dhaliwal: Caroline, you have an amazing bio and has had a great career spanning over a number of global financial institutions, but before we start talking about where you are today, I wanted to start it with the fact that you started in private practice at a large law firm, I believe Jones Day, and wanted to talk about your impetus moving in-house and how that came about.

Caroline Tsai: Sure, so thinking looking back I made the decision to move in-house about six and a half, seven years into my career and at the time it was a very difficult decision for me, for many reasons. First, I had never envisioned leaving Earl Jones Day or Washington DC, until I received a call from one of my clients asking me to consider the move in-house. At the time, I had two young kids, a 2-year-old and a 5-year-old, and was virtually working around the clock. But there was this kind of overwhelming fear of the unknown, and trepidation about potentially leaving what I was comfortable with. As it turned out, it was the first of many decision points throughout my career where, when it happened, it felt like it was the right time in my life. I was ready for a new challenge and it was time to make a move. And looking back now, I think I will say making that first move in-house really made me a better lawyer because when you move in-house and you go into a law department you gain broader perspective. And for me, I went from being a very specific deal lawyer to gaining the opportunity to really know, learn the business and become a strategic advisor. And most importantly, I began to develop some leadership skills. So, I would say then do with each and every new opportunity you may have, you get the opportunity to learn and adapt to new company cultures, building new relationships with your peers and then learning how to empower and develop a new team.

Bindu Dhaliwal: Well, that clearly was a big step in your career and can you share with us some other key inflection points that you think really put you towards advancing to where you are today, and either stretch assignments or different types of opportunities?

Caroline Tsai: Now starting off as an Asian-American, female lawyer, to be honest, I always felt the need to over-deliver. And that's because when I started at Jones Day, I started three to four months late because I had just had my first child. And I think because I started late, it accentuated that feeling that I needed to overcompensate and over-deliver, so that said, I was very fortunate in that I got the opportunity at Jones Day to work with a partner, Business Practice Group in DC. And he taught me not only all the strong skills and fundamentals that I needed to be a good deal lawyer, but most importantly, he taught me the soft skills I needed to build relationships with our clients and these were all big global investment banking clients with, you know, lots of teams of bankers with lots of personalities. And what was very special about Mark was that he brought me along for all the key meetings. He was such an amazing mentor, a sponsor, to this day he is on my own personal board of directors and I stay connected with him and seek his advice so, I think it's really important as people think about making decisions, if opportunities come, what I would say is in every single decision point I always first looked at what kind of company am I going to be joining. If you look at the three financial services company, I've had the good fortune to work at they've all had a strong purpose, a mission, corporate social responsibility above and beyond the business strategy that appeal to me. And secondly, more importantly, I think there is also an element of luck and trusting and having that perfect fit and level of *simpatico*, and alignment of values with my new boss, who in the end has always been not only a you know my direct manager, but mentors and sponsors who pushed me to continue to grow and stretch, and right now this role is Chief Legal Officer of Western Union is probably the most challenging, the most global and the most fun, and what really, entirely, if we tie it back, is as a first generation immigrant one of the reasons why this company attracted me was the value of places on financial inclusion and the belief that all people of all stripes should be treated with dignity. And there is this sense of true, I think all the way to the top down, that diversity and inclusion makes us stronger. And so, it's really empowering and fun to work at a company where those are the values that we stand for and as we see each and every day. And it inspires our employees to really work hard, especially in times of a pandemic.

Bindu Dhaliwal: And thank you for sharing that. I really like the piece about, especially about, you know, trusting your instincts and aligning, making sure that what you do and who you work for aligns with your values. I think a lot of people could relate to that. And so I'm just curious, when you graduated from law school, did you see yourself as a CLO of, you know, such a huge company?

Caroline Tsai: Absolutely not, and I will tell you because it took me several years to kind of get more comfortable in my skin and actually recognize I was one, female and two, Asian-American, I can still tie back to the first time I attended a national Asian Pacific American Bar Association conference at Atlanta. And meeting for the first time, the first time for me, Asian American general counsel, both men and women and I remember being so awestruck and just stunned because I had never seen that and that actually changed my kind of dreams and aspirations.

Bindu Dhaliwal: That's such a great story and really inspiring, I know Caroline, you've been, you mentioned this, but I know personally you've been a great mentor to a number of people in the legal field, especially women, and so just wondering any words of wisdom for those early in their careers that are watching this session?

Caroline Tsai: Yes, a couple. Once again, trust your instincts and also be sure that any role you take, and this could be internal movements as well within your current companies, just make sure you know and you evaluate who it is, that's going to be your new direct manager. Because I cannot overstate the

importance of having your direct manager ultimately become your sponsor, who will push you to stretch and will give you candid and transparent feedback and will speak about you when you're not in the room. The other point I would make is that quote you miss 100% of the shots you don't take. Women really need to get comfortable taking what I call "smart risks" and taking those "smart risks" will allow you to continue to grow, because if you don't go for it, you're never going to know what you're missing. And finally, it's a really special time to be a lawyer. You don't have to be a GC to make a difference. So, I really encourage all of you think about what you can do over and above your day job, whether it's pro bono, whether it's developing the talent or just giving back to the communities that your company serve. You'd be surprised how just doing that is going to help you grow in your career.

Bindu Dhaliwal: Caroline shared that her career trajectory was shaped by her trusting her instincts and taking smart risks. Our next guest talks about the importance of confidence and if you don't have it from years of experience, she recommends you can build your confidence by being very prepared.

Bindu Dhaliwal: We will be speaking with Kikelomo Lawal, who's the Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer of CIBC. In this role, she's a member of the bank's executive Committee and is accountable for overseeing the legal function globally, in addition to being accountable for the Corporate Secretary Ombudsman, and privacy functions key. Kike, welcome.

Kikelomo Lawal: Thank you very much.

Bindu Dhaliwal: So, I know you went to Harvard for law and I'm just curious when you graduated from law school did you set your sights on being a Chief Legal Officer? Was this where you thought you would be?

Kikelomo Lawal: I didn't. When I was in law school, a lot of the direction was toward firms, and so we all went to firms for the most part, there were some who went into government, but you didn't hear a whole lot of talk about going in-house and so no, I actually didn't imagine that at all.

Bindu Dhaliwal: And and so in terms of firms you went to, I know you went to a very large law firm on Bay Street Lakes, and you were there, and you had a great successful practice there. I'm wondering, sort of what was the impetus to move in-house from there?

Kikelomo Lawal: I think once I started practicing law in New York, I was at a firm in New York for about 6 years before I came to Canada. And when I worked there, I think I began to get a better sense of the in-house environment. So, I think at that time it probably was moving in the direction of going in-house, but then I got moved to Canada. And the best place to learn the practice of law, I think, once you're coming into your country will be in a firm, and that's what I did. So, I went to Blakes and I think once I got a bit of exposure to the practice of law in Canada and I got a little bit more grounded in some of the various subject matter. I began to see myself on a path to going in-house and so after a little about six years at Interac, about six years at least, I moved to Interac.

Bindu Dhaliwal: And so you know you've had a very successful 25 plus year career, you know progressively more senior roles, but I wanted to talk about what you think some of the key inflection points were that brought you here today, sort of what moved you in in the different spaces that you went to?

Kikelomo Lawal: I probably would say most of my inflection points are geography-based. The first one would have been moving to Canada. A big step, a big change for me and it was a cultural shift and then not so much in the practice of law. I think it's pretty similar, but it was a cultural shift, so that was the first one. I think the second one was probably moving in, moving from the practice of law in a private law firm into moving in-house. That was another inflection point because there are things about the practice of law in-house that aren't replicated in the law firm environment. There's an expectation that you will be one of many voices who are weighing in on an issue of persuasive voice, no doubt. But one of many we need to move things in the direction that the business wants to go to see what's feasible, as opposed to identifying potential problems. It's the third inflection point for me was when I began to do more strategic work. Interac was structured in 2018 and at that time we had to refresh a number of things, but also we create a new a number of things including our engagement model for the Board of Directors. That was a huge time for me, a hugely important time for me because I began to speak more and advise more on a strategic plane. I began to develop relationships with the board members, and it was pivotal in my in my progression I would say because it allowed me to add the relationship element to the technical element.

Bindu Dhaliwal: And how do feel that you were prepared for that? Or how did you prepare for that piece about, you know, that last piece when Interac was going through that change because it was a significant event in the organization structure, but also, you know, in the in the financial space?

Kikelomo Lawal: In the days leading up to that, I had the opportunity to sort of map things out. I'm a reader. I'm a person who digests a ton of information and then it comes out the other side with the with the plan and so there are probably many trees and maybe even a forest that died as result. But I consumed lots, I studied lots, I researched lots. And then I dedicated myself to finding out more about the people that I was going to be working with and making sure that I was armed with information before I got there.

Bindu Dhaliwal: Well that that's amazing to hear because I think, you know, you hear it from people, but being prepared and need to be prepared. But I, you know, it's interesting to hear, but the relationship aspect to what you just said because I think that's so important to build relationships with people when you're sort of in a work environment and doing something that significant. Again, so Kike I have seen it, I watched your career and you know seeing you in the financial services space for some time and I always see you as a strong and confident leader and I'm just thinking you know, I suspect that a number of people that are watching this have just started their careers or early in their careers and wondering for many of the women that are listening if you had any words of wisdom to share?

Kikelomo Lawal: When I think back to my early days trying to find my grounding, trying to get my legs under me, what I worried a lot about was confidence. And the way I figured it was that confidence came from experience and here I was early in the game I didn't have a whole lot of it. But the one way that I did try to get my wits about me as by researching and doing my homework and being prepared, and that is a way that I was able to derive confidence. I derive confidence from being prepared, wanted to be the best prepared person in the room, at least anticipating questions. Having the material in front of me. I'm being able to engage on that basis, and I think when you add that to the confidence that comes from having those things, the confidence that comes from people believing in you and supporting you. I think that makes for a Fuller picture until you can get to that point when experience will carry.

Bindu Dhaliwal: Well, you know, thank you for sharing about your experiences, And these words of wisdom. I think that they are so true. You know, the theme that I've heard is sort of being prepared, and you, I know you've had progressively more senior and challenging roles, and I look really look forward to hearing and seeing what you're going to do in your new role, so congratulations.

Kikelomo Lawal: Thank you. I'm looking forward to it.

Speaker: Stepping up and leading her company through structuring was one of the key inflection points in Kike's career. Our next guest, Marie Oh Huber, had a very similar experience, who was leading her team through IPO's and spinoffs, put her on the path to where she is today. The general counsel of eBay, Inc.

Bindu Dhaliwal: Marie, it's such a pleasure. Thank you for joining us today.

Marie Oh Huber: Thank you, Bindu. Nice to be here.

Bindu Dhaliwal: Marie, you've had a really fascinating career. You've had over 25 years of business and legal experience at a few global for 500 fortune companies at Fortune 500 companies, particularly being a legal leader at HP then at Agilent, now at eBay. And so, prior to your first General Counsel role, which was at Agilent, can you tell us about some of the key inflection points, maybe stretch assignments, moves that you made for roles that put you in a steeper path for advancement?

Marie Oh Huber: Yeah, I would say that one pivotal point in my career was deciding whether to stay at HP or to go to Agilent and when in 2000, HP decided to spin-off Agilent technologies. And at that time, it was one of the largest tech IPO's. And HP had decided to separate off a group of its businesses and on the one hand it would have been very safe to stay at HP. That's where I've been for 10 years, group of businesses I knew, and it was a very hard decision at the time and I remember even a couple of years later, wondering, "Oh, did I make the right decision or not", and I'm so glad I did, because what it allowed me to do was to go through an IPO and a spin-off process, to have a bigger role than I might otherwise have had in terms of forming a global team, having a leadership role on that team and then seeing Agilent make its own transformation.

Bindu Dhaliwal: Well, I think taking challenges is part of your DNA because I know when you joined eBay it was at a very critical moment itself, right? Even the process is spinning off PayPal and I guess maybe that didn't seem so difficult after you would put gone through an IPO. But how did that transaction also shape you as a leader? Because clearly the Agilent role did,.

Marie Oh Huber: Stepping into eBay at a time when the PayPal spin-off was not yet complete, but coming in at that intense period of change was really a challenge and also an opportunity and what I mean by that is separating two large companies like that is a monumental task, and it's not just all the systems and the customers and the businesses, but I think the bigger thing is the people. And not underestimating the toll in the difficulty is, if you take, for instance, of global legal team and realizing right when the HP spin-off, Agilent, and when eBay spin off PayPal, you need to decide which lawyer and other professionals is going to which company? So, two people are sitting right next to each other one might be going to one company, one to another. Some people have choices, others didn't, and it can be pretty traumatic and leading through that change in coming in from the outside was quite a challenge. And then coming to eBay was coming from the outside which is very different and I had to learn and I

certainly made mistakes along the way about the importance of really listening to the team and really understanding where they were coming from, taking the time to learn about the business, to learn about the organization, to build and develop the relationships that something that we had nurtured for years, if not decades, before.

Bindu Dhaliwal: Marie, I know diversity and inclusion is a big part of and very important to eBay. But your team in particular under your leadership is doing some very interesting things on this point, so wondering if you could talk a little bit about that.

Marie Oh Huber: Yeah, thank you Bindu. And we have focused on a number of things. One is on the workforce where we have committed to adopt the Mansfield rule, to help ensure that we have a certain percentage of women BIPOC and other members of underrepresented minorities in our interview pool. We're also using tools like Textio to help make sure that we're eliminating bias when we're looking at resumes. We are also trying to use our influence as a large global team who uses outside services and partners with law firms, many of whom care deeply about this issue, but we are asking them to make sure that a fairly high percentage of the actual billable work is done by women and people of color in other groups, and we're holding them accountable for that. We feel very proud about the fact that eBay was really the founder of something called the Long Technology Diversity Collaborative, where we're now partnering with a number of other firms to offer internships to diverse 1L students who might otherwise have a hard time finding a law-related job after the first year. So, they'll spend part of the summer with us, and we kept our commitment this year during COVID and part of the summer with a large law firm and a number of other companies have adopted a similar model. And we're really proud of the fact that that has scaled. And then finally I feel like diversity, equity, inclusion is not a status, it's an ongoing dialogue and journey and we're really trying to make sure that we ourselves as leaders are educated and not just thinking and talking, but acting. So, for instance, yesterday in our leadership team meeting we were talking about which of the senior leaders sponsoring, and sponsoring rather than mentoring, we already have a mentorship program, people who don't look like them, who might not get the same opportunities for visibility, exposure, and assignments. And it is something that I feel very deeply about and have been in conversation with a number of other chief legal officers sharing best practices about what we can do as large corporations in decisions and just members of the community, not just the legal community so far.

Bindu Dhaliwal: And so, as we wrap up, I just wanted to ask you if you had any thoughts for many of the women listening that are probably early in their careers, or mid in their careers. You've had a fascinating career, moved around industries progressively, senior leadership roles, but any words of wisdom as to what you think that people should look for or strive for in their career?

Marie Oh Huber: Yeah, it's a few things. First is trust yourself. Have the courage to take risks, recognize that it's OK to succeed or fail or always learn. Just be willing to do that to be curious, to learn, to be open to opportunities and to people. Recognize the importance of building relationships and then I would say always pay it forward.

Bindu Dhaliwal: Well, thank you and thank you for paying it forward now and sharing your story and taking the time with us because I think a number of people would be interested in hearing the key inflection points in your career, Marie, so thank you so much for joining us.

Marie Oh Huber: Thanks for having me.

Bindu Dhaliwal: Being open to opportunities, whether within your organization or outside, always willing to learn and taking smart risks. These are just some of the insights I gleaned from today's guests. I wanted to thank Caroline, Kike and Marie for sharing their career journeys. We hope you found this episode both informational and inspirational.

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