KILPATRICK TOWNSEND

KTalks



Welcome to the first KTalks! This series will reach out to leaders in the business and legal community with five questions to seek their insight on matters ranging, for example, from how law firms work with in-house counsel, to tips on mentoring new attorneys, and advice for work/life balance. **Kali Wilson Beyah** is our first featured profile. Kali is Managing Director, Global Talent Management at Delta Airlines. She has been with Delta for over eight years where she previously served as Assistant General Counsel for Litigation and Regulatory and Government Affairs. Prior to joining Delta, Kali was a Partner with Kilpatrick Townsend in the firm's Litigation Department.

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What was the most valuable skillset that you learned working at Kilpatrick Townsend that translates to your position as Managing Director, Global Talent Management at Delta -- the world's leading airline?

My years at Kilpatrick and the skills I learned working there have been foundational and essential to my work as Managing Director of Global Talent Management. First, my functional work is all about developing Delta's people and ensuring we have the people and leadership capabilities to fuel the company's strategy and future. My years at Kilpatrick — chairing the Associate Committee, leading teams, helping to hire, grow and assess new and summer associates — correlates directly to my current work at Delta. The scale is just greater and more diverse with 80,000 employees worldwide.

Second, I learned to be relentless in problem-solving and getting to the root of an issue during my time at Kilpatrick. This drive and the critical thinking it requires transcend roles. These skills have served me well in my eight years and three roles at Delta.

Why did you choose to work at a large law firm first before going in-house?

As someone who knew she wanted to be a litigator from the start, I never thought of going in-house vs working at a large firm. . . until Delta called, of course. I always figured going in-house was a move transactional lawyers made, so while it wasn't an intentional sequencing, I am glad it happened.

Starting at a large firm and working at Kilpatrick Townsend were invaluable. The opportunity to observe and interact with different lawyers allowed me to learn best practices from each. Additionally, a number of people took the time to provide me with meaningful feedback and to help me hone my craft on a wide range of matters. My experience in-house has been wonderful and has allowed me to stretch in tremendous ways, but the hands-on training and substantive coaching I received at Kilpatrick Townsend can hardly be duplicated in most law departments. The pace and resources in-house typically don't allow experienced lawyers to train younger lawyers, review their work, and provide feedback with the frequency and depth a large law firm provides.

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If you could offer three tips to law firms about how to work well with in-house counsel, what would those tips be?

Make work product turnkey and practical. Little things make a difference, so avoid long memos and consider communicating in a way that could be shared with a lay person. Take thoughtful steps to ease an in-house counsel's load. I remember the first time outside counsel sent me a draft answer with the complaint's allegations embedded in the

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memos and consider communicating in a way that could be shared with a lay person. Take thoughtful steps to ease an in-house counsel's load. I remember the first time outside counsel sent me a draft answer with the complaint's allegations embedded in the document. It was a small thing, but saved me from digging up a complaint and flipping back and forth. Lawyers who get results are essential, but lawyers who make the path to those results easier to navigate and a pleasure are priceless.

Know your client's temperament as to legal matters and be attuned to shifting tides. Some companies are comfortable with being adversarial while others never want to be left of "the v" in a lawsuit or threaten to walk away on the cusp of a deal. Understand if your client and their leadership are scrappy, conflict-averse, etc. This frequently influences a client's desired strategy, budgeting flexibility and direction. Moreover, pay attention to shifting tides—- recent laws, business outcomes, and leadership changes can alter the company's "temperament" on legal matters.

Be thoughtful and remember the big picture. Think about the client's desired outcomes and when you can't get them there on one path, consider and offer alternatives. Be comfortable asking for additional context and the big picture —it's what the best counselors do.

What was the best piece of advice you received as a new lawyer?

Early in my career, I skipped a family reunion due to work. My grandma said, "All work and no play makes Jill a dull girl." It was simple and funny at the time, but it has grounded me over the last 18 years and especially the last 11 years as a working mom. I have and always will work hard because I love what I do; but I feel good about the kind of wife and mom I am because I've tried to live with that advice and perspective in mind. Today, I'm pretty sure no one would accuse me of being "a dull girl".

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What is the biggest change that you have seen in the practice of law since you graduated law school?

The emphasis on business development earlier in a lawyer's career and the decreasing dominance of institutional clients have been seismic shifts. When I graduated law school, it was often said that doing good work was the best way to develop business. Perhaps we did ourselves a disservice in implicitly encouraging a single dimension. Today, whether in a company or a law firm, there is clearly a need for more than a single competency and dimension. It is important to have complementary capabilities, such as relationship building, developing and motivating others/teams, process optimization, etc.

For more information, please contact John Page at jpage@kkilpatricktownsend.com