

I worked for Morgan Stanley's M&A group in New York and Tokyo right out of college. I knew I wanted to build a career in technology as a leader and dealmaker, and I thought that a legal degree would give me analytical skills and agility, and amplify my strengths as a communicator and mediator. I was right. I worked for the enforcement division of the SEC during law school, and have kept my license active, but have worked primarily on the business and finance side of the house. But I value and lean on my legal education every day.

1. Everyone knows that law school and the Bar are difficult and stressful; what helped to keep you focused and your head above water? Any tips for current students?

I was working full time when I took the Bar. Initially I tried to study when time was available, and that strategy failed. I ended up following a schedule for 3 months where I would get to the office at 4:00AM, study for 4 hours, then work a full day. I felt overwhelmed at times, but I kept reminding myself that in the context of a career, three months is the blink of an eye.

2. July 2018 Bar pass rates in California saw a drop that hit a 70-year low, with 20 out of the 21 ABA-accredited law schools in the state suffering a [pass rate decrease ranging from 1%-21%](#). As a result, many students are preparing to take it again in 2019 (in addition to new first-time takers). If you did not pass the Bar on your first attempt, how did you prepare differently the next time around? If you did pass on your first try, what do you think helped you the most, and were you able to carry any of those strategies into your professional life?

3. After graduating, what were the first few years of your professional life like? How did that compare to the expectations you had during school?

I started in banking and went back to banking, and I had already worked in an M&A group on Wall Street, so I knew what it was like to go home at midnight, shower and put on a fresh suit, and have the car waiting to take me back to the office. When I went back to banking I didn't have to repeat that, but my friends who went to big law firms got to experience it for the first time.

4. Being able to effectively network with peers, associates, and employers is a major factor in furthering a professional career, particularly in the legal field. Are there any common misconceptions or outdated advice that you've heard regarding the "proper" way to network in today's work environment?

As processes are automated and the amount of work being managed by lawyers diminishes, networking is necessary not just for success, but for survival. In my view the golden rules of networking are: a) get a warm introduction, b) offer value up front, and c) be concise and professional; time is precious.

5. What are the top 3 things you learned as a lawyer that you wish you'd known when first starting?

Growing up, I spent summers in a remote fishing village in Alaska where my uncle fished, and where the attitude was "figure it out and get it done". Business was a black box when I first entered the workforce, but my legal education and experience in the trenches helped me to realize that it isn't just in the back country where you should "figure it out and get it done". There is a tremendous amount of inefficiency and inertia in business and the law, not because things are done in the best way, but because they are done as they have always been done. Disrupting and innovating those patterns, in a constructive way, is the single most important lesson that I've learned in business.

6. What made you change paths, and how has your past legal experience helped you in your current endeavors?

I work in mergers and acquisitions between software companies. Deals typically include IP issues, employment agreements, ongoing litigation, governance issues, management, board and shareholder conflict, contract issues, security law, anti-trust, cross-border issues – the list goes on. I don't write contracts, but I advise clients on deals that touch on all of these areas, and find the legal background invaluable.

7. Any last words of advice for our students and recent grads?

Buying a hammer doesn't make you a carpenter, but the hammer can be really helpful if you choose that path. Likewise your law degree is a powerful and flexible tool, but you have to establish the confidence, and summon the energy, to deploy it for maximum impact.