



Hogan Lovells employee spotlight

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Q. Did you choose a law career or did it choose you?

A. Well, this is embarrassing to admit – but after college, I decided on law school because a lot of other people were going. I was pretty sure I would be OK at it, and I had no idea what else to do. I didn't have early aspirations to become a lawyer, and I certainly had no sense of what I was getting myself into. But it's been a wonderful ride so far.

Q. Can you go into a little detail about your career trajectory including your time at Hogan Lovells?

A. During law school, I knew I wanted to work in public health, and I was fortunate to land in the FDA's Office of the Chief Counsel (OCC) after graduation. My work focused on the regulation of food and dietary supplements, primarily dealing with product safety and promotional issues. The time I spent at OCC was priceless and endlessly fascinating (though I quickly came to regret dropping Admin Law during 2L).

After a few years, I came to Hogan's FDA practice as an associate in the Medical Device group, where I was able to work with some terrific colleagues and clients on compliance and grow my skill base as an FDA lawyer. I eventually moved to in-house life sciences roles, but something was calling me back to the food space, which had always resonated strongly with me. I started advising food startups in Brooklyn, attending all the food-industry meetups I could find, and learning all I could about food innovation. And then I heard that a young e-commerce company was looking for a regulatory lawyer with a food background. Several years into the role, it's still an adventure and a great fit.

Q. How did you find the experience of moving in-house? Any advice for those looking to do the same?

A. Before coming to my current role, I had a clear vision for what I wanted to do next: work with a young company in the food industry and help build its regulatory framework from scratch. While I had been actively looking for a new role, I took my time.

When I finally moved into my current position, I was thrilled to get started, but with the volume of work at that time, my transition was pretty exhausting – especially because I'm a classic introvert who needs a good amount of time and space to think. So, the fast clip of startup life was challenging. And in the beginning, it was tough to achieve that fabled "balance" we often associate with in-house life. But, I knew that the role was exactly the kind of challenge I was seeking, and by choosing to see it as an exhilarating growth opportunity, I found my own way to thrive.

There's much to think about when considering a move, but my advice would be to invest time in creating a detailed vision of your ideal role, including what "balance" means to you and where that fits into your goals, and commit to letting that vision guide your search.

Q. What kind of company is Blue Apron?

A. Blue Apron provides customers with the pre-portioned ingredients they need to prepare delicious recipes at home. Launched in 2012, the company's mission is to make incredible home cooking accessible to everyone. Blue Apron has developed an integrated ecosystem that enables it to work in a direct, coordinated manner with its supplier network to deliver high-quality products to customers nationwide at compelling values.

Q. Your area of expertise is in food law. Can you tell us about your role? What types of matters cross your desk on a daily basis?

A. Food law sounds pretty niche, but as with so many other types of legal specialties, you do find yourself working on all kinds of projects. These fall into two very large buckets – operations and communications. On the operations side, I focus on providing compliance support to our facility-based food safety and quality teams. The communications work is quite varied; for instance, I work with our Regulatory team on labels and labeling, support our customer service team on managing customer inquiries, and advise our brand team as an unsolicited but sometimes helpful copy editor.

Q. What do you see as some of the biggest challenges and opportunities for the food processing industry?

A. It's a particularly meaningful moment to be working in this industry. Food and food-delivery companies are helping people feed themselves and their families while maintaining social distance, and many brands are enabling customers to keep exploring food and to have fun, novel dining experiences at home. Like others in critical-infrastructure sectors, the food industry is certainly challenged with maintaining production while keeping its workforce safe under multiple, fast-developing guidelines. I'm an optimist, though, and see a host of opportunities going forward. When customers aren't able to find their go-to products or brands, for example, that's an opportunity for other options, such as innovative formulations and plant-based meat and dairy alternatives, to step in and fill those gaps.

Q. You and I became acquainted over a conversation about introversion in the legal profession. This seems to be gaining traction as a Diversity & Inclusion issue. How did you become interested in this topic, and what do you think are some unique talents and skills of introverted lawyers?

A. As I mentioned, I'm a true introvert (INTJ, for the Myers-Briggs fans out there), and I spent most of my early years fighting my quiet tendencies. When I finally came to see introversion as a strength rather than a liability, that was a total shift in my mindset and career happiness. Today, outside of my law practice, I have a coaching consultancy called Quiet Advocate, where I work with other professionals who identify as introverts, helping them craft fulfilling careers that leverage their unique strengths and abilities. I've learned and applied so much about thriving as an introverted lawyer over the years, and it's been incredibly rewarding to use this experience to help others build their confidence and carve out their place in the working world.

I think introverts bring so many gifts to the practice of law. Broadly speaking, introverts tend to process information holistically and deliberately, excel in the solitary tasks of research and writing, and listen empathically; traits that can make introverts terrific advocates as well as leaders. Of course, every personality type on the introversion-extroversion spectrum is equally valuable! When individuals and teams figure out how to tap into each person's unique gifts and zone of genius, that's when great things happen.

Q. How do you think introverts and extroverts are faring differently during this time of social distancing?

A. At a high level, we can say that introverts are getting more of what they need, while extroverts might be getting less. I can attest that I'm enjoying a bit more focused time to do deep work, and I know my more extroverted colleagues and friends are yearning for the face-to-face interaction they need to feel inspired and energized. While it's been a challenge for everyone, regardless of personality type, I've seen that we're learning new ways to nurture a sense of community and take care of ourselves while practicing social distancing. It's a huge, novel experiment for everyone, and it helps to remember that we're all contributing to it together.

Q. If you had a time machine, what advice would you give the newly-qualified you?

A. I'd tell that version of myself to invest more in developing relationships with mentors and sponsors. I invested all my energy in obsessively developing competence, but I was missing the bigger picture. I think that seeking out more conversations with experienced attorneys would have helped me think about my career more creatively and holistically, focus my energy in a more strategic and balanced way, and probably even relax a bit.

Q. How do you achieve work-life balance and what do you do to unwind?

A. I do a lot of cooking, an activity that now involves a lot of creative substitutions. I also try to do yoga every morning while my nine-month-old looks on in amusement. And after a long day, my husband and I kick back with a glass of wine and our favorite aspirational home-improvement show.