



Resilient podcast series

Life and legal leadership: Building resilience and adaptability through community

Host:

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Guest:

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Don Fancher: Welcome to Resilient. I'm Don Fancher, a principal in Deloitte Financial Advisory Services, Regulatory Risk and Forensic practice, and the leader of Deloitte's Chief Legal Officer Program. I am also your host for the Resilient Podcast, Chief Legal Officer track. Planning for the future is a philosophy that Regina Bynote Jones, the senior vice president and chief legal officer of Archer-Daniels-Midland (ADM) truly lives by today, but that wasn't always the case.

In this episode, Regina reflects on pivotal moments, such as balancing a demanding job in information technology with law school at night, all while battling a sudden medical diagnosis and the undergoing treatment. Regina's experiences taught her invaluable lessons in perseverance, the importance of asking for help, and the power of community support, all of which continue to guide her leadership style today.

Let's hear what Regina has to say. Regina, it is so great to have you here today. I am thoroughly looking forward to this conversation, and just give us, to start, a little bit about your background and what your growing up was like. Who is Regina Bynote Jones?

Regina Bynote Jones: Hi, Don. Thank you for the opportunity to be here. I am really looking forward to our conversation. I look forward to the opportunity to hopefully create space for people to reflect on some of the things that are meaningful to me and hopefully will be meaningful to them. I grew up in Memphis, Tennessee, for a few years, and we moved around across the US, so I lived in Kansas City, Missouri, in a suburb of Kansas City, which is Parkville, Missouri.

We also lived in New Orleans, Louisiana, and Dallas and Oklahoma City. And the

reason why is because my dad was a regional manager with Steak and Ale, which is a restaurant that we kind of grew up in and was a staple for many years.

Don Fancher: I remember it well.

Regina Bynote Jones: Yeah, exactly. Well, I loved Steak and Ale. It was kind of a part of me. But anyway, I moved to Texas when I was in the eighth grade and spent my high school and my college years in Texas. And quite frankly, that was the state and the experience that really shaped a lot of who I am. I have been married to my husband, Kevin. We met in high school. We have been married 29 years this year. We have two boys, Kevin and Dylan.

We have just really used Houston as our home, but throughout my life, my mom's had a huge influence on me and my dad as well, who passed away right when I

graduated from college. But when I think about who I am, a lot of it is shaped more so for my adult years versus my childhood years, because I feel like now I am old enough that I have lived longer as an adult than I did as a kid.

Don Fancher: It's interesting being in the restaurant industry growing up in a family like that, moving around like that. That's a pretty demanding industry. Anything that in your childhood you took away from watching the way your dad worked, the way your family had to revolve around his schedule and everything that that requires?

Regina Bynote Jones: I think it taught me work ethic early, and I definitely had an understanding of what my dad did. And then on the flip side, my mom was a nurse and she worked at night, the 3-to-11 shift and sometimes the 11-to-7 shift. And that helped teach me just the importance of resilience in a family because between them, they co-parented at a different level because my mom would be there in the daytime and my dad would be there at night.

Don Fancher: Absolutely. So, when you went to undergraduate, you went to Sam Houston State, correct?

Regina Bynote Jones: Yep. Go Bearcats!

Don Fancher: Go Bearcats! How did you decide what you wanted to study, or did you really know when you went into your first year at Sam Houston?

Regina Bynote Jones: That's a funny question because I am a person that if you had to ask me, I believe you should have a plan for everything. I would say until I was probably 21, I didn't have a plan for anything. So I was just lucky. I think my counselor said to me, "Hey Regina, you should probably go to college," which I was planning on doing, but I think in my head I was thinking I was going to wish it into existence—because it was never an option in my family.

And so I really call it luck at scale because my counselor knew me and understood me and she just kind of brought me in one day and said, "Hey, I think you should go to college and I think you should go to Sam. You would still be close to home, and I think it's an environment where you would thrive."

And I think she helped me with the application, and I was accepted. My dad had always told me, because our family was lower middle class, "You can go to whatever college you can afford." And that was so true because ultimately after I was accepted to Sam's, I started looking around at other schools, but I couldn't afford any of them.

He meant that, not to be facetious, but because he didn't have the income—nor my mom—to be able to afford to send me to college. So I went on student loans, but Sam was actually a balanced education that didn't put me behind, where I graduated with \$10,000 worth of debt, not a hundred thousand dollars' worth of debt. So it ended up being a really good choice for my career and my options.

Don Fancher: So you go to Sam, no plan, serendipity guided you there, if you will. You didn't study pre-law, you didn't study the types of things that a lot of people who might want to be a lawyer study. In fact, you weren't looking at that route. So what did you end up choosing to focus on there?

Regina Bynote Jones: So, I actually always wanted to be a lawyer and I figured out, well, Sam was a school known for criminal justice, so I might as well major in CJ. And my dad called me and he was like, "You need to change your major to something where when you graduate, you can get a job or you can afford your lifestyle, and trust me, you can't afford your lifestyle on the salary of someone who majors in CJ."

So, I actually surprisingly listened to my dad. In spite of the fact that I thought CJ

was the right thing, I changed my major. He said I should focus on technology. I also was self-aware enough to know I wasn't good in math, and computer science was the only real technology major they had. So, what I did was I majored in general business and then I took enough classes on the computer science side to—I really kind of combined it into what turned into management information systems.

So, I was balanced in that way, and then as a student, I also joined this program called INROADS, which was for minority students to work in corporate America, and I worked as a summer intern in IT for four years.

And as a result, then when I graduated, I moved just straight into the IT field and I was able to support myself. I really, really, really enjoy and love technology. So, it ended up being something that I now have a passion for, and it was one of the best decisions I ever made—or, I guess, my dad had me make.

Don Fancher: There you go. So, in that regard, you get out of undergrad. You got the technology degree, but what did you do with that degree? Where did you go to work? How did you begin to drive that? And then, let's move that in from there: When did law school become an option for you?

Regina Bynote Jones: So my first job out of undergrad was with El Paso Energy, which was formerly Tenneco Energy. And if you remember Tenneco, it was a conglomerate. And when I was in this program, INROADS, that I referred to a moment ago, the way INROADS worked is you would work with the same company each summer and the hope would be that when you would graduate, their investment would pay off and you would start to work for them.

In this program, INROADS, I had won Student of the Year my final year as well, which was a big deal in the INROADS program, and my company offered me a

job—Tenneco—to work in the information technology group. So, I started working in that group, and I loved it. It was then bought out by El Paso Energy, which is now I think the two have split where El Paso manages the natural gas side, whereas Tenneco still continues to exist in other focus areas.

Don Fancher: So you went into Tenneco/El Paso, and you're doing IT, but somewhere along the way, you did decide to go to law school.

Regina Bynote Jones: When I graduated and I was working in IT, Tenneco had a program, as most companies did, where it was really a benefit to be able to go back to school, and they pay for your education. It was almost like health insurance where you just, if you want to go back, any degree, they will pay for a certain percentage of your schooling. Normally, it was 80% to a 100%, as long as you kept over a C average.

So, I felt like when I was working that I was missing an opportunity if I wasn't involved in some postgraduate program. I had always wanted to be a lawyer. I alluded to that but had not done it because law school was super expensive. So, I elected to sign up for educational reimbursement, and I started law school at South Texas College of Law, which was [in] downtown Houston, and they had a law program at night. I started that program with the inclination that my plan B would be to be a lawyer. But I was extremely happy in IT, but then if I ever needed to have that law degree, I could (a) check the box and say, well, I always wanted to be a lawyer, so I will never regret not going to law school. And (b), if for some reason I ever had to pivot careers, law would probably open some doors for me.

Don Fancher: Were you doing law school and working full-time all wrapped in one?

Regina Bynote Jones: Yes, I was. When I started working at Tenneco, I was a December grad, so I started working at

Tenneco in January. In February, I started having this weird health issue where my eye was twitching, and you know how sometimes if your eye will twitch, it will bug the crap out of you because you just want it to stop. And it normally stops after about 24 hours or less. Well, mine just kept on twitching for weeks, so I would keep going to the doctor saying, "Why is my eye twitching?"

Long story short, it was the spring of that year and my doctor had just diagnosed me with a brain tumor at the same time all of this happened. When I started treatment, I actually started law school, so I was in law school at night, working full-time, and doing radiation therapy. Well, it wasn't cancer, but it was a brain tumor that was non-malignant. I was doing that twice a day as well.

Don Fancher: Let's look at this a little bit. You are working full-time and you are diagnosed, thankfully, non-malignant, but still a brain tumor, and you have to have treatment. It didn't enter your mind that maybe I ought to push the law school thing off a year or something?

Regina Bynote Jones: You know, life has a funny way of teaching you how much you can endure. No, it didn't cross my mind. If anything, it gave me purpose and something to focus on. I will never forget when my doctor told me that not many people my age had to deal with their mortality. And so there was an insatiable need in me to feel like I was going to do something about this situation. I wasn't going to let it happen to me.

So, going through law school kept me occupied, working full-time kept me occupied, and dealing with my treatments in the background was just part of the purpose that I had within me to continue to live, to graduate, quite frankly. And if I merge into another story that comes from that, I reached out to our CEO at the time because Tenneco had just gone through the El Paso merger. His name was Mike Walsh, and he had been diagnosed with

a brain tumor shortly after acquiring the company.

So, I called Mike Walsh's office from the hospital and I was like, look, I just started working there and I need a doctor because they don't have a specialist because my brain tumor was in my brain stem, which controls your breathing, your heart, and your lungs, and I needed to have a specialist to be able to deal with it. And Mike Walsh took me under his wings and supported me immensely and intensely during that process where I am a new employee dealing with a brain tumor and all the other stuff I talked about, in parallel with trying to help drive value at the company. He wanted to make sure I was able to be successful in doing so.

Don Fancher: That's an amazing story. I mean, the courage to just do all of that, but also to have the foresight and the willingness to reach out to the CEO. There's not a whole lot of new first-year employees that would even take that as an option, but also what a blessing that he reciprocated and actually put the time in to help you with that. I think that shows true leadership for sure.

Regina Bynote Jones: And that was really my first introduction to leadership because it's one thing to say a new employee calls the CEO. It's another thing for the CEO to not just pick up the phone, but let me tell you what he did. At the time, that was when there was a separate executive health medical program. He put me in that medical program. Now remind you, I told you I had just started. He put me in the executive health medical program. They paid for a 100% of all of my medical. He also set me up with his doctor and aligned our doctor's appointments so that I could just tag along when he goes to his appointments. So, his doctor would meet us both there at the same time because, quite frankly, it was just more efficient. So, we would go to our doctor's appointments together. He set me up with his lawyers just for support along the way—and his doctors. I had the

chief of neurosurgery, the chief of neuro-oncology—all of the same doctors as him—and I didn't do anything except ask for help.

So he went above and beyond. The final thing I will say is he also reached out to my boss at the time and told her that if I needed anything, I was to get it, from a support standpoint with my role and with my company, and that they were to be as supportive as possible to make sure that I didn't feel under pressure if I needed to take care of my whole self, as opposed to trying to just focus on work.

Don Fancher: The other thing that that brings to mind, Regina, I just think about so many situations where people are facing a challenge and there are opportunities for other people to help. So again, his willingness to do so—and those around him and their willingness. But it also really speaks to the importance of asking—asking for help. As human beings, so often we can be wanting to really drive everything on our own, we want to be independent, but we live in a community, we live in a group. We always have for reasons because you need help and amazing that you had the fortitude to ask for the help. But I think that's an important lesson even right there.

Regina Bynote Jones: Yes, I could not agree with you more because one thing that I have learned in my career and through that experience as well is certain things, you can't go them alone. Showing of strength is an acknowledgment of that. In retrospect, I can make it seem like I was this great, courageous person, but in reality I was scared to death, and he was the only person I knew of that ever had had a brain tumor, and I needed a doctor, quite frankly. So I wasn't going to allow my pride to get in front of my future.

Don Fancher: Absolutely. Well, and obviously a good outcome, and you were able to overcome that and continue on and here we are today. So, a blessing in that regard as well.

Let's go back a little bit then to law school and also ultimately how you moved into becoming a lawyer because that's an interesting story in and of itself. But how did the rest of law school go, and then how did you decide, or when did you decide really, to move or shift from IT into law?

Regina Bynote Jones: For the reasons I talked about, law school was tough because I was doing a lot, to say the least. It was a time back in the day where I am sure current students can't relate to, but they used to print out your grades and post them on the wall at the end of the semester, and you had to go find your name and your class and your grade. And I remember my first semester, I literally cried in front of everybody else looking at their grades because I had made C's.

And in retrospect, I am thinking I should have been happy that I made C's, but I just felt like such a failure. That in itself also taught me about the importance of just resilience and commitment and keeping things grounded as to what you can do versus what you want to do.

I worked for the four years in law school in IT. When I graduated, my first boss with Tenneco, which was a gentleman, Blake Young, ended up having moved to be the CIO at a company: Dynegy. And so Blake reached out to me and called me to hire me. [He] asked me if I was interested in a role because he had responsibility for both IT and this small, little contracts group that was in Dynegy, where they were working on supporting all of the contracts for the IT group and for the technology team.

And so Blake offered me that role. So I went and did that for a few years and that was me, in his mind, I was over the group that was responsible for email, I was over the group that was responsible for application development, and I was over the group responsible for contracts for technology. So, that was how I kind of began to have a little foray into a little bit about the law, continuing to leverage my technology skills at the same time.

Don Fancher: Ultimately, Dynegy went through an interesting acquisition, and I know you ultimately got a front-row seat to, if not the actual fraud itself, some of the aftermath of one of the more famous fraud situations in the US. Tell us a little bit about that and how that impacted you in your career.

Regina Bynote Jones: So that was one of the most impactful experiences throughout my whole career, and it shaped me. When I was working for Blake, who was a huge mentor for me throughout my career, Blake had given me the opportunity to lead this project or play a significant role on a project that was looking at e-commerce for the company. He had also given me the opportunity to present e-commerce, my project, to the board—which I did.

I didn't know that on that day the board was also contemplating who the next chief of staff for our chairman and CEO would be, Chuck Watson. So, after the board meeting, I guess apparently in the meeting they were like, well, why not have her be the chief of staff?

Long story short, Chuck called me after the board meeting and asked me to come to his office. He offered me the role to be his chief of staff, and it was supposed to be one of those roles where you come in for 18 months and you go do something else. And I ended up being in the role, I think, for around three years.

And it was a formidable three years because it was the time when, I remember, Dynegy had sponsored the Tour Championship that year and Chuck was actually playing golf with Tiger Woods that day. And he got a phone call on the golf course and then shortly after, we were leaving, and I was like, well, have no idea what happened and why you would have cut off—and I think he finished the round and then we left shortly after.

What had happened is Ken Lay had called him and had introduced the concept of

buying Enron. Dynegey was number two at the time in our space, and Enron was number one. So, we had been chasing Enron for years, and there was a lot of pressure by companies to try to deliver some of the results Enron was being able to deliver to their shareholders.

So with all of that said, I refer to it as 11 days in November where we went from having champagne and strawberries in the boardroom, because we were buying our second-largest competitor, to on the verge of bankruptcy.

During that period, it was where we had come to the conclusion that there was no way we could understand the financials of the company. And I remember our CFO and all of the advisors that were involved had basically come to reconcile that there is no way that the financials that are supporting this company have merit.

I was 30ish at the time, and I remembered it was during the time when we were working in paper, and Enron had sent over all of the org charts for their legal entities.

And I remember counting that there were, if I recall, 11 CEOs that were under 30. And I remember feeling like I thought I was really in a cool position as chief of staff to the chairman and CEO, when there's 11 CEOs at Enron that are younger than me.

With all of that said, it was a period where I went from working side by side with people on really key initiatives and working hand in hand with the chairman and CEO and the board, to now being in a situation where everything that we had ever done over this period in this role was now being questioned by the Department of Justice.

Dynegey, as I mentioned, came close to bankruptcy, but it was because of the fact that we had had to pull out of the Enron merger because we no longer could see viability for the merger. And that sent Enron into bankruptcy, and that also sent Dynegey in a spiral very close to bankruptcy, and then triggered myriad

government investigations, which then led to our controller being sentenced to 24 years in prison.

So, it was a really tough environment, and that was the point when I officially made the pivot from focusing on information technology to focusing on, now, legal and regulatory aspects of working with this challenging, now, investigation.

Don Fancher: So did you actually become a part of the legal department then at that point within Dynegey?

Regina Bynote Jones: Interesting, it was a hybrid role. Again, because when moving out of the chief of staff role because now I am dealing with the whole leadership team that's pretty much under indictment or at least under investigation.

What happened was because of the fact that I had the IT background—and this was before eDiscovery was a thing—I also had the email group that had reported to me and I was a network engineer, so I had also helped to set up our network, our servers, our security framework, and also our email framework.

So, now, the discovery for the government and the subpoenas included within scope, for the first time really, email. And so I had to get involved now to explain and to also pull in all the electronic data that was relevant to the government's investigation. And then I ended up, what I refer to as being seconded, not officially, just spent a whole lot of time working with Department of Justice actually trying to explain to them what different things meant and the technical dynamics in addition to the actual meaning of things that were in emails that I was privy to because of my role, i.e., it was a time when they couldn't understand why were time zones different.

Like if someone sends this at 1:00 p.m., the other person received it at 2:00 p.m.—help us understand what happened there. And so, understanding the technology ended up being a huge differentiator for

me, but also a very important element to the overall investigation. So, I did that for probably 18 months, spending days and weekends at the DOJ explaining all of these notebooks of printed emails.

Don Fancher: You were literally at the forefront of what we now all take for granted being discovery and data management and data information governance, things of that nature. You were right there at the very forefront of it, and basically teaching the DOJ lawyers what it really meant and how they could take advantage of it, use it, or understand it.

Regina Bynote Jones: Yeah. All under the threat of obstruction of justice.

Don Fancher: Yeah. Not necessarily, maybe voluntarily, but maybe also not completely voluntarily.

Regina Bynote Jones: Exactly.

Don Fancher: Voluntold, if you will. So, how did you find that pivot from IT, now kind of a hybrid role where you are now actually serving as an attorney, which one of the interesting points, too, here: You actually never worked at an external law firm, you never worked in private practice at all. So, you have always been in-house, if you will.

Regina Bynote Jones: It actually gave me the opportunity, because you are absolutely right, I have never worked for a law firm in a lawyer capacity. I did work with Vinson & Elkins, a Texas law firm, for about six months in IT, working with their eDiscovery team as a matter of fact.

Don Fancher: So after you left Dynegey, you took on a legal counsel role at a global energy company, and I think you advanced through several division general counsel roles and actually lived in several places outside of the US.

That also requires a pretty dynamic ability to team with others, as well as teaming

within your own family. Share a little bit with us about those experiences.

Regina Bynote Jones: My husband was former military, so we have always been, in our family, open to new things. I spoke to my husband and we decided that we were going to check the box “mobile,” which would mean you would be willing to live in a country other than your country of assignment where you were hired.

So, we moved to Paris. We didn’t speak French. We had actually never been to Paris. We had a 3-year-old and a 4-year-old who also did not speak French. And we were going to work in a country in Europe where I had never really interacted with any European countries. So, there were dynamics that were mixed up where even though I knew contracts, we’re in France, in French, and now moving two toddlers. So, it was an amazing experience because it helped us really create what we now refer to as Team Jones, recognizing that everyone brings something to the equation and together we are able to actually deliver more.

So, the funny thing is our kids learned French way before we did, and so they would do the interpreting. We then had other roles that we would play to say, OK, how can we make this work? We were a very tight-knit family because we ended up really relying on each other, because we didn’t interact a lot socially, because French was a much stronger presence. Now, there’s more English in France. So, it taught us a lot in that experience far beyond just what it was like to work internationally. We were in Paris for five years.

We came back to Houston after that, mainly for tax reasons, and then were asked to move to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur was a similar experience in that we had never been to Kuala Lumpur. We had never been to Southeast Asia period, and we decided we were going to take a risk and be open to doing something new.

We packed our bags. We had a requirement to say two bags per person, and so we flew to Malaysia with eight pieces of luggage, nowhere to live, and an open mind to say that we were going to find a place to live, and it was going to be great—and it absolutely was. We found a place to live, it was amazing.

Our kids had some of the best educational/academic experiences they had had. We started scuba diving as a family, and it was something that we could never re-create. It was an amazing experience. And then we came back to Houston.

Don Fancher: I want go back to the KL thing because I have been to KL. It’s a great city. It’s a very dynamic city, but I can’t imagine going to KL and not knowing where I am going to live. I mean, that’s just crazy to me! How in the world did you even convince yourself, much less your family, that that was a good idea?

Regina Bynote Jones: With my husband Kevin, when I just think about his military experience and him being stationed in different countries around the world, including in the Middle East, we were just open in that what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.

We knew we were going to have a hotel, and so we checked into the hotel. We had eight bags of luggage, and quite frankly, that’s your incentive to get out of that hotel! Eight bags of luggage and two kids in one room with two double beds? We found a place to live pretty quick, and our standards weren’t extremely high. It was just that mindset, which is what doesn’t kill you, makes you stronger. It’s not going to break you, and it’s guaranteed to be a good experience, so we might as well do it together.

Don Fancher: Well, I love that, and I am now starting to see another theme: perseverance, resilience, obviously the name of the podcast series, but I mean,

between the way you went through your medical situation, the way you went through the Dynegy situation with Enron and all the challenges there, and now here, going across the world. Just put your head down, move forward, and make it the best it possibly can be.

Regina Bynote Jones: And always realize that there’s a silver lining in everything.

Don Fancher: Let’s shift a little bit to your role as a chief legal officer. You had the chance to become a CLO in 2018, is that right, or was it a little later than that, with Baker Hughes?

Regina Bynote Jones: It was actually another company, Delek, right before Baker Hughes, so I go to Delek. I was there for three years, and that was when I was offered the opportunity with Baker Hughes. And I will say, because of those two experiences combined, the only thing that I really needed to round off my career was to actually do the job and to actually test my capabilities to serve in that very important role for a publicly traded company.

So, because I had had that experience, I now was fully equipped where it wasn’t a huge risk for Baker Hughes to afford me the opportunity to work with them as their chief legal officer. And so that was kind of how I landed at Baker Hughes. I had a reach-out from a recruiter that put me in front of the CEO and key members of the leadership team and the board, and I was offered a great opportunity and I cherish it today.

Don Fancher: So talk a little bit about your experience of moving from GC [general counsel] at Delek to actually being the CLO. How prepared do you think you were? I mean, obviously you have had all these experiences, so you very much had the historical experience, but what was different about that CLO role maybe that you didn’t anticipate or that really took some effort to be able to accomplish?

Regina Bynote Jones: So, first, every day was hard.

Don Fancher: Plus I think you were starting during COVID, so that made it even....

Regina Bynote Jones: That made it worse. So, there were two dynamics there. First of all, it was at the very beginning of COVID where we were almost on complete lockdown. So, I would go into the office along with my CEO and a couple of other people from the leadership team, and that ended up being our circle during COVID.

The silver lining for me was the fact that Lorenzo Simonelli, who I have a deep amount of respect for and was the CEO, and is the CEO of Baker Hughes. Lorenzo normally traveled a lot because as a CEO, you're in a stakeholder-facing role, and because of COVID, he was grounded, if you will. So, I had a very unique, distinct opportunity to really get to know my CEO as a leader. That was one huge benefit.

I had to work really hard at relationship building, though, because at that time you were building your relationships through Zoom or Teams. So I had to schedule calls with individuals just to meet them and spend a half hour just asking about them and who they were because I wasn't forwarded the opportunity to just do an immersion by traveling around the globe and meeting my team.

So it forced me to really dig in and double-click on the relational side and the soft-skills side of the job. And if I am completely honest, a lot of times people look at me and they think I am a social person, but I am really, like my son says, "an introverted extrovert," in that I can be social, but my preferred place is quiet.

And so it forced me to really lean into relationships and empathy because of everything going on with COVID and some of the skills that, quite frankly, can get overlooked when you are dealing with tough situations. So, I was able to really

kind of hone those, and then later I was able to, also in parallel, build up a rapport with my CEO, a rapport with my CFO, and with key members of the team because we were in the trenches on really important issues, but we were also grounded at the same time where we had to kind of do it together.

So, there was this saying that we had, which is, you want to go fast, go alone; you want to go far, go together. So, that was a real good exercise in teamwork with a common purpose in the midst of crisis, building now relationships and rapport with new team members in parallel.

Don Fancher: That's an amazing thing for all of us to remember. I mean, you need to have all the knowledge. You need to be able to accomplish all the objectives, but the relationships may be the most important thing of all because that's, then, back to that teaming perspective, back to that collaborative perspective, that's how you get that done.

Regina Bynote Jones: Right. As lawyers, oftentimes we want to think that we're good because of our technical knowledge and understanding of the law. And don't get me wrong, that's a prerequisite for the seat. But in reality, my CEO does not need a good lawyer. He needs a good leader—he or she. So, as a result, in order for you to be that, you've really got to hone the skills that we talked about because you don't lead people through crises situations and not do it in a way where they want to work with you.

Using that "in the trenches" example, you want a person next to you that isn't just going to protect you and help you get out of the trench, but is also going to be someone that you want to be with the time that you're with them and someone that you know cares about you as a person just as much as they care about themselves. And so honing those skills could not be more important as a leader and looking at what's best for the business, not just what's best for this one path based on precedent of the law in particular.

Don Fancher: You clearly were in a really positive place at Baker Hughes. You had great respect for your CEO, you had built a team, and yet a few years later, you get an opportunity where you are now—ADM, Archer-Daniels-Midland—to become the CLO. How did you make that decision, and why did you know that was a move you wanted to pursue?

Regina Bynote Jones: I don't want to sound like it just happened, but sometimes in life opportunities come up at inopportune times, but that doesn't mean it's not the right thing for you. So, I was very happy, like you mentioned, at Baker Hughes, and I think had I still been there today and nothing changed, I would still be happy and having a thriving career.

Irrespectively, when I got the call about the opportunity at ADM, you have to think about now what it offered me and what I could potentially offer the company. First of all, is I'm grounded and I have a real strong sense of purpose. And in the energy industry, I had worked for over 30 years, I was always committed to the important purpose of powering the world because energy fuels economies, it fuels development and growth and families, and provides a really important ability for us to drive progress at scale across the globe.

Well, now I am pivoting to food and agriculture. So, if I pivot from energy security to food security, now I still have a really important purpose that we're serving. Also, the agriculture industry has, and ADM in particular, has a real accountability when it comes to even energy sustainability and food sustainability and food security and health and wellness, and all those principles that are so important to every single family across the globe.

So, working in industries where you are helping to feed Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, there's something that comes with that. So, the opportunity to pivot to an industry that was still fairly adjacent, if you will, because ADM gets involved in biofuels and we are all about food, feed,

and fuel. So, food for humans, feed for animals and pets, and fuel for the world in a sustainable format, and we partner with energy companies today to do that. So, for me, it was adjacent enough to where I wasn't coming in and I would be flying completely blind. It was grounded in purpose that I could relate to and I could have passion about and it also afforded me the opportunity to continue to leverage my global skills—ADM is in 190 countries.

And it also added a degree of scale and complexity that even an amazing company like Baker Hughes was not affording me because it's just massive. And all of that turns into challenge, it turns into opportunity, and it turns into an ability for me to really have a meaningful impact in a way that, quite frankly, is differentiated from ones that I had had in the past.

So, when I met our CEO, Juan Luciano, it was almost a no-brainer for me because Juan has the equal passion and commitment, in addition to all of those things, to integrity and to principal leadership. So, it's not hard to work at ADM even though we deal with really big issues every single day, but it gives me a sense of energy from being able to be a part of it.

Don Fancher: How long have you been at ADM now?

Regina Bynote Jones: I started in September 2023.

Don Fancher: It would be great to hear about how that transition to such a much, I mean, Baker Hughes is a very large company, but now you are talking, as you said, even grander levels of scale, greater global reach. Regulatory issues are still a big deal. You had obviously high regulatory issues in the energy space, food safety, all of that similarly situated. How has that transition gone, and what learnings might you have from making that move?

Regina Bynote Jones: So, I have learned about myself that there are people that

run from the fire and people who run to the fire. I clearly run to the fire because ADM has had a lot of challenges—not in a bad way because ADM is an amazing company, as I said earlier.

But like you said, the challenges that we have compared to other companies, just the scale is massive. And so dealing with litigation that could have exposure of some of the amounts that we are dealing with or involve multiple countries around the world or commodities that impact global economies. So when things change in our industry, the world is impacted.

Don Fancher: You've got over 8 billion stakeholders.

Regina Bynote Jones: Yes.

Don Fancher: Because you are pretty much impacting almost everybody in the world because of the reach of ADM and how expansive your products are within everyday life for most of us.

Regina Bynote Jones: You are absolutely right. And it reminds me of another saying that I mention sometimes, which is nobility obligates. ADM plays such an important role in the food ecosystem. With that comes real accountability, too.

And so when you think about purpose, we are always thinking about, how do we make sure that food is healthy? How do we make sure that food is accessible—developing and developed [countries]? How do we make sure that we are compliant with all the rules of all the 190 countries we work with, and that people's pets are just as healthy as people's families?

And how do we help with energy sustainability and making sure that we are thinking about applying innovation and bio-everything? And so it's just strikingly challenging as well as phenomenally fascinating at the same time. And I get to work, again, with some of the smartest lawyers in the world,

literally, and with some of the smartest professionals.

When you look at the scientists, I have scientists on my team, I have PhDs on my team, and that's just—talk about not being the smartest person in the room. I yield to some of the technical experts that I get the benefit of working with every single day.

Don Fancher: I want to kind of bring this around to, obviously, the purpose of our podcast series, it's about resiliency, it's about leadership, leadership traits. There are a couple of areas I want to look at specifically. One of them is going to be around technology. I want to go back to your technology knowledge and how that impacts this.

And I want to talk about transparency because I know that's something that's really important to you. But before we even get there, just from a leadership perspective, you've given us a lot of great insights into your leadership style and into your thoughts on a resilient leader. How would you summarize that, if you could, for our audience?

Regina Bynote Jones: There's a story I think about when you ask that question. So when we moved to Southeast Asia, my husband wanted to take on scuba diving, but I am really not a good swimmer. I'm not going to drown, but I'm also not going to be in a triathlon. But anyway, with all of that said, he wanted to scuba dive and with our two kids. Our kids were 10 and 11 at the time.

And so I did not want to for one second, and there's this concept in scuba diving. Not only did I not want to, I was terrified of going into the middle of the South China Sea on a boat where it took us 30 minutes to get out there, and then just jumping in the ocean. So I didn't want to do it, but we said we were going to do it. And I also was acknowledging the fact that my kids—my 10- and 11-year-old—were also going to be down there too.

And in scuba you have to save yourself if you have an issue. You can't be saving

Resilient podcast series

other people because with gear and all of the things that you are trying to manage. My whole point is when you are learning to scuba dive, there's a concept called taking the giant stride, where you just kind of walk off the boat. And that is a concept that I think applies here, which is in life, once you hit that water, you don't know what's down there.

When you are on the boat and you're going across some of these beautiful, exotic places, and you're looking at the ocean, it just looks beautiful. But once you get down there, you are going to become much more acquainted with all the other things down there. You don't know what you're going to run into, but you do know that you're prepared, you're well-trained, and that, nine out of 10 times, you're going to surface and you have got a big tank of oxygen on your back.

So, I always joke about, if you drown when you have on a tank of oxygen, I mean this—your risk profile is really low if you are trained and you do what you need to do. So my point is, in life, you've just got to be ready to take that giant stride, and you've got to be trained, and you've got to be lucky, and you've got to be smart, and you take a risk.

But when you are prepared for that risk, and you now introduce yourself to that wildlife that's down in that ocean and you think it through and manage your surroundings and work with your team members, which is your dive buddy and everybody else, you'll be fine. So, it's all to me about mindset.

There was something that Amal Clooney said once when I attended a seminar. She would say how she can't guarantee some of her clients that the ending is going to be good, but what she can guarantee them is we will go through this together. I will be with you along the way, and I don't know the outcome, but I am very comfortable and I know that we both have hope and we will make it through this together. And whatever that outcome is, we will deal with that too.

And that inspires a different feeling in your teams when you are leading them as well,

is I am not selling outcomes here. But I am committing now to being that resilient leader that's going to be with you side by side, that's going to make it through whatever it is we are tackling together, and that's going to make sure that not only am I prepared and trained and ready, but also that you are in parallel. So we're backing each other up along the way, and we win together and we lose together. To me, that's what comes to mind.

Don Fancher: It's a great segue into one of the areas that is of utmost importance. It's on everybody's mind right now. It's around technology and more specifically, AI, Generative AI. Big impacts to many of the professions, certainly to legal, to the way legal departments operate.

Given your unique background in technology and all the work you have done as an attorney and now being a CLO, what advice would you have for others in how to approach that issue? How to take the journey, and what are the important efforts that need to be pursued?

Regina Bynote Jones: I absolutely love technology. When I look at the technological advances that have occurred over my lifetime, they are astounding. It's fascinating. Using still my scuba dive example, we need to take the giant stride into introducing ourselves to the opportunities that technology can bring to both differentiate, accelerate, advance, and enable our business, our strategies, our law departments.

With that, you still have to have a healthy fear and appreciation for: What does this bring with it, and what are the things that I need to do to be prudent, appropriate, and prepared for whatever risks are associated with it as, as well? But we can't lead through fear. And a lot of times I do think in our profession, because of what we do and we're risk people, we lead with the "what-ifs" and the fear of "it hallucinates," or there could be bias that's imputed into some of the algorithms and it could lead to other outcomes that we didn't anticipate.

And all of that is true, but fear is not a reason to retract. Fear is a reason for

us to understand. And to look at the opportunistic and innovative things that technology can bring. Doing it in a way where we're conscientious and we're also providing the right guidance and perspective as to how we properly address the risk and how we properly anticipate potential outcomes, but still succeed in our ultimate objectives in spite of that.

So I think it's a balance, but we have to go into this with eyes wide open, but also with a degree of rigor because it's not going to wait on us. And the pace of change is one that we can't afford to sleep on. So I think we are moving a lot slower than we should, just as an industry.

And I think that the opportunities are extensive, but we've just got to figure out now how to leverage those the right way. And there are opportunities for our profession as well as opportunities for our clients. And so it's a win-win, if you ask me. It's just, we've got to really lean into it in parallel.

Don Fancher: It's interesting you say that because I have seen this written and I have heard other people talk about the fact that business right now is moving at the speed of business, not at the speed of technology. And that's good in certain ways, like you talked about. You talked about the risks that are associated. You need the strong governance, you need all of these components that make sure you're moving appropriately, but you can't be moving too slowly. What are your thoughts on where the legal department within an organization sits and the role of the CLO in helping to drive that?

Regina Bynote Jones: I almost think it's similar to the statement you made on moving at the pace of business, too, because I have to make sure I have balance to where it's aligned with ADM's technology adoption, because we still have an infrastructure that we have to protect.

We still have risks, whether they be cybersecurity or whether they be tied to Generative AI introduction or other analytics or risk of hackers or other things. We have to be cognizant of all of those things because from a stakeholder

standpoint, we owe it to them. So that balance is really important to make sure we're at the forefront as appropriate and pausing when we should pause and pushing the gas when we should push the gas. But all doing it in alignment with the business and where those opportunities present themselves and where the most prudent places are for us to focus. Because we don't need to be the first mover in everything.

The technology is going to move, and so it's just a question of when do you jump in and now join and become a part of something? When do you lead it? And at the same time, when should you be cautious and allow someone else to figure out what those key risks are? And then you come in behind them and still capture the opportunity, but just don't wait too long.

Don Fancher: As a leader, driving all the things you have talked about regulatory wise—change, the technology initiatives that are in place—it's really important, as you've said, I've heard you say, but I would love you to expand on that, to be transparent. To be able to lead from a place of transparency.

Can you share with us a little bit more on that philosophy you have and how you put that in practice and how others might be able to accomplish the same?

Regina Bynote Jones: First of all, I think that starts with honesty and integrity, because having true transparency means that you also have to have courage, all right? Because if you do have true transparency, you're not always delivering good news. You're not always telling people what they want to hear. But you're being honest and grounded in making sure, with integrity, we're delivering the right messaging and we're speaking truth, and we are conscientious of now the importance of clarity.

And I was speaking with someone today and we were talking about just—bad news doesn't get better with time. And

people respect and appreciate now you being able to have the courage to have transparent conversations and not coming across and trying to demonstrate that you are perfect or that you know everything. Vulnerability plays a part of that too.

So when I think about transparency, I think about courage and having courageous conversations and bringing people along your journey with you. You don't prepare a soldier for war at war. And you've got to go through some things together with your partners and with your colleagues, but if you can't trust that I am going to be clear with you as it relates to the challenges that are ahead of us, or the reality of our environment, then you're compromised.

So when you think about transparency, it's a mutually beneficial concept, but it takes a degree of courage that sometimes is underappreciated because you can have difficult conversations, but you can do them in a way that it exudes respect for the other person and respect for what we're trying to accomplish together.

Don Fancher: And last question, Regina, what do you see happening in the legal profession and for people who either are currently CLOs or desire to be a CLO? What's going to happen in the next 10 years, and what should those folks be focused on?

Regina Bynote Jones: When I think about our profession, in the first place, we are a profession that has a purpose too. And the integrity of the law, the seriousness of our roles as stewards of all of the many different legal principles that apply based on where you sit, that's real and that's important.

And I think we need to, first and foremost, stay true to that and not lose sight because the fabric that this country and every country—not just the United States, but other countries around the world. The fabric of those countries relies upon the legal systems that exist and the lawyers who serve in those professions.

I would love to think I just have a job, but I don't. I have an important responsibility, and so first and foremost, I think our profession needs to make sure we stay true to that.

And then we need to make sure that we do some of the things we've talked about, whether it be leveraging technology, whether it be leading with purpose, whether it be helping make sure we're transparent about what integrity looks like and feels like, and how we grow together to make sure we're staying true to values and principles and our stakeholders and all of those things. I think that's important, but I also think that when we think about technology and automation, it is going to happen.

The question is whether we're going to let it happen to us or whether we're going to be open to the change that comes with it. Because we cannot practice law five years from now the way that we do today. And I think there's something in our profession where we don't want to admit that, but we need to be really testing ourselves just the same way we hold other industries accountable for applying innovation and for reinventing themselves.

All of those things, that applies to us too. So we have to start thinking about how we practice law in a way that delivering our services is also done by leveraging technology, innovative concepts, and leveraging our resources to maximize the output and the potential. So a lot, I think, needs to change.

I think 10 years is far too long of a timeline.

I think some of our youth in our profession also can play a much more strategic role than they have in the past. The concept of associates come in and learn from us, I think is a bit frightening. We need to be learning from them just as much. And together, I think we can continue to transform our profession into one that continues to have an amazing impact on global society, but also one that does it in a way that is impactful.

Don Fancher: Beautifully stated. And a great way to end our conversation. Regina, thank you for the time. Thanks for sharing all this, your background, your story, and being transparent with us.

Regina Bynote Jones: Thank you, Don. Have a good one.

Don Fancher: Regina, your personal anecdotes, like the crucial assistance from your company's CEO during your medical treatment, really highlight the importance of asking for help and the power of community support. These experiences have clearly taught you invaluable lessons in perseverance and the strength found in leaning on others.

Also, great to hear about your international work experience. Moving across the world and working in places you had never been before has clearly provided you with a unique perspective on adaptability and cultural awareness.

And I really love how your family embraced the idea that everyone must bring something to the table, emphasizing the true importance of teamwork and flexibility in preparing for any challenges that come your way.

I hope our listeners will appreciate that your outlook not only highlights the value of collaboration, but also underscores the necessity of being open-minded and ready to adapt to any different environment.

We covered a lot on today's episode, and if you want to know more about the chief legal officer's role and many perspectives across legal leadership, visit us on deloitte.com and search, chief legal officer.

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