Proskauer

Alumni Spotlight: Megha Parekh, Jacksonville Jaguars

Alumna Megha Parekh, previously a corporate associate in our New York office, is now Senior Vice President and Chief Legal Officer for the Jacksonville Jaguars. Megha was recently named to SportsBusiness Journal's 2018 "Forty Under 40" list of the top sports executives under the age of 40, recognized for displaying "innovation and excellence in their careers." Megha told us about her position and life after Proskauer.

Tell us about your day-to-day at your current company.

The most interesting – and challenging – aspect of working with the Jaguars is that every day is wildly different. I'm responsible for legal, government relations, human resources, technology and certain aspects of stadium development. Our in-house legal team handles work for the football team and also for our amphitheater and events companies, a sports analytics company, and a handful of other portfolio businesses. On any given day, you might find me at City Hall working with the administration on stadium capital project planning or downtown development plans, giving a training to our people, or sneaking off to a quiet but sunny part of the stadium to read a contract.

How did your Proskauer experience prepare you for your current job?

In a very direct way, it prepared me because I worked on the acquisition of the Jaguars for the team's owner, Shad Khan. When I started the job, because I had done due diligence during the acquisition, I had information about the material agreements, the organization structure and the management team.

In a less direct way, during my time at Proskauer, I worked on a variety of different matters in the corporate department. For instance, I worked on a cross-border public M&A deal that went through a rigorous antitrust review and also into shareholder litigation.

Learning how to educate yourself (the right amount; you can't be an expert in everything) about new issues is in itself a skill. I never pretend like I know what I don't, and I find it interesting to learn about new areas of the law (and, now that I also manage people, new thoughts regarding organizational culture, leadership and other professional development topics). When I first started at the Jaguars, I didn't know much about HIPAA compliance or workers' compensation or managing insurance policies, and I had to develop a strategy for efficiently, cost-effectively and thoughtfully handling those matters.

What do you love about your career?

I think "love" is the wrong word to use in the same sentence as your career. Every job is still a job and loving it is dangerous if you have a personality like mine; you'd be very boring and work all the time. I save my love for my family and friends and Jon Bon Jovi. That said, my favorite part of my job is knowing that I play a part in creating memorable experiences for our fans. I enjoy seeing a stadium full of people celebrating touchdowns or an amphitheater full of people singing along to Cheap Trick. Sports and music enhance quality of life and make people happy. I love making people happy.

What career advice would you give to junior associates?

I worked for some very demanding partners during my time at Proskauer. Working for demanding people is the best way to improve your work product (even though it can be exasperating at times). Don't be afraid of working for the smart people; seek those opportunities out and try to anticipate what a partner or client will want before they ask you for it.

One of the most interesting moments of my career was when I saw a letter pop into a data room and printed it right before walking into a meeting with the client. Coincidentally, even though we hadn't discussed it before, the client asked the partner for the letter and instead of having to go print it I pulled it out so they could review it. There was, of course, luck involved there, but it made an impact on the client because he felt we were very prepared and efficient.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Recently, I decided I was going to try to focus on getting a life (and being better at delegating to and trusting the very smart people who work with me). The morning after we lost the 2018 AFC Championship game, I texted a friend who owns a beach bar and asked him if I could play an acoustic set on March 5. That's the year anniversary of a childhood friend's passing: a friend who told me that I am good at everything besides having fun. I've been playing guitar since I was 12, off and on, but it always took a backseat to school and then work, and there were a few years where I hardly played at all. I decided that I was going to honor my friend's life and challenge myself to have some fun. I practiced about two to three hours a day every night until the set, formed new friendships with people who practiced with me, and traveled with an acoustic guitar (which leads to a lot of interesting conversations in airports). I played the set on March 5, 2018, and it was one of the most fun things I've ever done! Now my goal is to keep it up so I can play by fire pits with friends.

Do you have any advice for someone thinking about going in-house?

If you want to go in-house, consider carefully if you want to work in an environment where you are handling a lot of random issues (which makes it difficult to become an expert in anything) and working with people who have a different thought process than you. Working with sales people is much different than working with other attorneys at a law firm. I enjoy the diversity of thought and the variety of work, but if you prefer to focus on one practice area in depth, then going in-house may not be right for you.

What did you want to be when you were a kid?

I wanted to be president of the universe.

What are you watching on Netflix right now?

I'm currently watching *Justified.*

When you're not in the office, where would we find you?

The beach! Throwing the football and hoping that Coach [Tom] Coughlin walks by and decides he sees talent he must have on the field, or playing a game that I poorly named "beach soccer tennis." We make the rules up as we go, mostly, but it's essentially ping pong rules as two people are volleying a volleyball back and forth with everything but their hands. I'm self-dubbed reigning champion of Jacksonville Beach.