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How long have you been working for your current company?

Since 1985

Briefly explain your career history and what led you to your current position.

During my last year in the University of Iceland, I was employed at the Housing Finance Fund and then for eight months at the State Taxation Office. I gained valuable experience but at the same time I realized that I preferred to work in the private sector. In March 1985 I joined Sigurjonsson & Thor. At that time, not many in Iceland were aware of intellectual property (IP). I immediately became interested in this area of the law. Another part of the work that appealed to me was the international clientele. I had to explain and analyze the legal situation in Iceland to my colleagues in other countries. I enjoyed the correspondence and interaction with colleagues from all over the world. No fax or e-mails existed then, needless to say – only air mail and, occasionally, telex or telephone.

What is your proudest professional achievement and why?

I am proud of the fact that I overcame the challenge of become a partner in the firm as a young woman and serve thousands of clients during interesting times in IP for 27 years. I have experienced constant development within the company and in the area of IP. I am grateful for the numerous interesting challenges that I have faced during my career.

What are the greatest challenges that you face in your current role and what do you do to overcome them?

The pressure of meeting deadlines and yet delivering professional work every day. I stay physically active, maintain passionate interests (reading, walking, music, Pilates, etc.) and I try to cultivate a habit of being grateful for my job and opportunities since this helps me to stay focused on the task at hand.

How difficult is it for you personally to attain work-life balance and how do you endeavour to do this?

It is not always easy but if there is no balance between work and my personal life, my passion for the work will diminish. A few principles help. I never take work home with me. I try not to work long days and I control pressure by delegating whenever possible.

Did you have a mentor or role model in your career or while you were studying law? Who were they and how did they help you?

Many excellent lawyers have inspired me, each in his own way. They keep my interest in the law alive by sharing valuable experiences or legal opinions. The list of names would be too long but I shall mention one person as an example from my University years. Gaukur Jörundsson was one of my professors in the University who held high-ranking posts in various academic, judicial and administrative capacities. I was fortunate to attend and enjoy his classes, his professional qualities and strong sense of humor.

How effective do you think corporate diversity initiatives are? What methods do you think are most effective and why?

Diversity initiatives are positive under certain circumstances as tools to introduce changes. For example, in terms of gender representation, corporate boards should be more diverse. They should, of course, represent the women's proportion of the population. However, if drive and talent are properly rewarded, that should be the best diversity initiative in the longer run.

Were there any points in your career when you felt you were at a disadvantage or at an advantage because you were female?

No.

What do you think have been the most significant changes for women in the legal industry over the past five years?

The change for women in the legal industry over the last five years does reflect a change in the number of women pursuing a legal career. Since I started to practice law, the change for women has been gradual but enormous. Back then most of my clients abroad and attendees at conferences were male. Today the situation is unrecognizable as compared to 1985.

