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Women in Technology: Lindsay Llewellyn

Interviews and Profiles

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In the September 2017 Technology issue, the Docket spoke to six women who are leading the vanguard in Silicon Valley and beyond. From San Francisco to Austin and Singapore, these women exemplify the mix of fortitude, talent, and foresight necessary to succeed where there is no roadmap

for success. Email editorinchief@acc.com if you know a woman in the legal tech sphere who would like to be featured in the Docket or ACCDocket.com.

Lindsay Llewellyn wanted to move in-house because it would allow her to focus deeply on an issue and solve the legal problems that affected a company. It had to be a company that had strong cultural values — one that could influence the way people lived — and wouldn't require her to commute outside San Francisco. In the abstract, it sounds like a lawyer's daydream.

But she waited patiently until that position materialized. And she could not have envisioned a better role. She was hired as the first litigation lawyer for Lyft, the fastest-growing ride-hailing app in the United States. She was the fourth lawyer hired but has since seen the legal department bloom to over 30 people.

When she first joined Lyft, she handled all litigation matters. That included partnering with outside counsel, and eventually Lyft's growing legal team, on the pivotal *Cotter v. Lyft* case. The issue went to the core of Lyft's business model: Are its drivers employees or independent contractors? "Lyft believes the law is clear, that drivers who use the Lyft platform are independent contractors," Llewellyn explains. "We think that for a number of reasons, including the fact that they work their own hours and are their own bosses. Most drivers really like that. They view Lyft as a flexible way to make ends meet." The settlement that Lyft's team reached with the plaintiffs preserved the flexibility that allows its drivers to work for themselves — 93 percent say it's the most important reason they drive.

As Lyft's litigation portfolio continues to expand and diversify, she is now mostly concerned with scaling the litigation team. When looking for someone to join the team, she looks for someone she can learn from. "We're trying to get all different viewpoints LYFT and perspectives on our team, so the ideal employee is someone with different experience, someone whom I respect, and someone whom I feel is equally passionate about the work that we're doing," she says. General Counsel Kristin Sverchek's team is 70 percent women and is evidence that female lawyers can thrive in the technology space.

Lawyers who work at Lyft — and startups in general — need to have a high-risk tolerance and be prepared to work at a frenetic pace. The excitement is what makes the job attractive to Llewellyn. "There are a lot of outdated regulations that don't properly mesh with some new technologies and new industries," she says, adding that it's an opportunity to come up with creative legal solutions with no playbook she can consult.

It's not dissimilar from her upbringing. She didn't have a playbook to become an industry-defining lawyer. Growing up in Orange County, California, none of her relatives were lawyers; she's the first in her family. Fortunately, a family friend took her to a local law office to expose her to real-life legal work. "That was really informative and helped me figure out what path I wanted to go down," she reflects. Once she knew what was out there, all she had to do was be patient.

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