



GC of Boston Consulting Group, Ulrike Schwarz-Runer, on the Challenge of Tomorrow

Interviews and Profiles





Ulrike Schwarz-Runer

Managing Director, Senior Partner,
General Counsel

Boston Consulting Group

If there is one thing Ulrike Schwarz-Runer is, she is a general counsel. But if there are *two* things Ulrike is, she is a general counsel and a forward-looking optimist. As managing director and senior partner and general counsel of Boston Consulting Group (BCG), Ulrike sees her position as an opportunity to have a positive impact on the firm, and to “lead with integrity.”

A diversity of experience breeds empathy

Prior to BCG, Ulrike’s career took her all over the world. She grew up in Austria and over the last nearly 30 years held legal and business roles in a variety of cities, from Brussels, Frankfurt, New York to Dubai, and now London.

Her role at BCG is unique. “I wear many hats at BCG,” she admits. “There are various roles that I play in terms of our people, our clients, as well as the reputation and governance of our firm.”

None of those roles at BCG, however, define Ulrike, at least not entirely. Every position she’s held has been formative and valuable, especially considering the global events she experienced over the years.

Ulrike remembers living through several crises including the fall of the USSR, the dot-com bubble, 9/11, the global financial crisis, and now the COVID-19 pandemic. She says of them all, “advising through a crisis are the times when you learn the most.”

But her biggest lesson is the immense value of learning from people around her. When asked what kind of advice she would give to young lawyers, she had a simple answer: “bring a growth mindset and have empathy.” That approach led her to adapt to different environments, connect with and learn from others throughout her career.

“At BCG, we always consider the impact that we have as a firm — in the world, for clients, and for our people” Ulrike says, recognizing that BCG’s purpose is to “unlock the potential of those who advance the world. This is the standard that BCG holds itself to as we evaluate the work we do and do not pursue, how we execute our client work, and how we contribute to society. Integrity is our #1 value, and ‘bringing insight to light’ and ‘driving inspired impact’ are among our core purpose principles. Our firm’s values and purpose shape our day-to-day actions and are a key differentiator for the talent we attract to BCG.”

Ulrike and BCG are committed to diversity, equality, and inclusion in hiring and career development. “Diversity of thought, expertise and background is one of BCG’s principal values and

success factors that we take very seriously. Our diversity makes us stronger and more successful in everything we do.” While BCG has made outstanding progress, Ulrike points out that diversity, equality, and inclusion remain important priorities that will continue to shape BCG. “I’m proud that our legal team is diverse,” Ulrike explains, “but we will never be satisfied, as this is an ever-evolving goal. There is more we have to do.”

Working in new ways

“As part of our bold climate agenda BCG has committed to achieve a net-zero climate impact by 2030, and with our world-class expertise, we are advising some of the largest corporations on their transition plans and climate commitments,” Ulrike says, “This is where our firm has the biggest impact. Advising our clients across all industry sectors on the most critical topics of our time is where we can make a difference, and — in line with our purpose — advance the world, together with them.”

BCG also stays ahead of the curve with new ways of working. One way they do so is by embracing “bionic working.” Even before COVID, technology was pushing businesses to change in significant ways, Ulrike says. “Lawyers can’t quite — nor do we want to — continue like we have worked for decades.”

Ulrike and her team implemented new technology for the firm’s governance practices, conflict management and a global contract management system. “It is so important for lawyers to be able to make data-based decisions, so that they can focus on what really matters,” she says, “this will allow the legal industry to move to agile ways of working. How lawyers work, will change dramatically in the next few years.”

Ultimately, that is the impact Ulrike wants to make: help progress BCG by shaping the way its legal team protects and advances the firm and helps the firm deliver on its purpose. She believes “deeply in ‘care and dare’ by giving people the opportunity to grow while being looked after. At BCG, we ‘grow by growing others.’” Her ultimate goal is for BCG’s legal team to continue to look around the corner and take on the challenges of tomorrow.

Getting to know Ulrike

What have you done to stay grounded during the pandemic?

Although we can’t change the uncertainty around us, we can adapt our daily habits. It is imperative that we look after ourselves and everyone around us as this is a marathon, not a sprint. I try to stay in the present moment, keeping a positive outlook. Being grateful for what I have, helps me hugely in maintaining positive energy. And I start and finish every conversation with a smile.

What piece of technology have you used the most during the past year?

Zoom! And my oven.

How did you know you wanted to be a lawyer?

I knew this from ever since I was a little girl. I take delight in deciding what’s right and what’s wrong and assessing the many shades of grey in between. Fairness is critically important for me, trying to understand different perspectives and getting to the best possible outcome, after

listening to all sides. That's ultimately what being a lawyer is about.

[Rachel G. Leman](#)



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Before joining ACC as a contractor, Rachel worked as a reporter at the DC-based congressional publication CQ, the local Illinois paper the Rock Island-Moline Dispatch-Argus, and her college paper the Augustana Observer, where she also served as editor over the Opinions section.

