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What He Learned on the Actor's Stage

Interviews and Profiles





Chris Murphy Ives

VICE PRESIDENT AND DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL,
EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA & CANADA
FOR HP

By any account, Chris Murphy Ives, the vice president and deputy general counsel for HP, is a successful lawyer. There's a chance he could have been an equally successful actor.

"I figured the two professions are pretty similar in a number of ways," he explains. "So, I thought I'd try the lawyer gig first and then see how it goes...I would always have the possibility to go back to the acting."

Murphy Ives was in the cadet commander of the same platoon as Kiefer Sutherland during their time at St. Andrew's College in Aurora, Ontario, Canada. When Murphy Ives was in school musicals, Sutherland would watch him from the back of the auditorium during rehearsals.

During his time at St. Andrew's College and McGill University in Montreal, Murphy Ives usually played characters who provided the comic relief. Having a sense of humor still serves him well; today he uses it to defuse tense situations in business or in legal negotiations to project a positive atmosphere and move discussions forward.

Perhaps the only characteristic that defines Murphy Ives more than a buoyant sense of humor is an intrinsic curiosity about the world. Raised entirely in Canada by his British father, who taught at St. Andrew's College (but not while his son was enrolled), and his Canadian/British mother, who lived much of her formative years in the United Kingdom and taught art. Murphy Ives realized, from an early age, that his perspective on life was different than those around him. "When I was a young, I had an English accent and used British vernacular – both of which I got from my parents. That opened me up to jokes once I hit school. Though I soon dropped the accent, I realized that having a different perspective was useful. In the same way, I still find it interesting to learn more about different cultures, and in a way, try to adopt some of the best things from all of them."

His first experience of living abroad was during his junior year at McGill University. He elected to study in Jerusalem – a religious capital to Jews, Muslims and Christians. As a Catholic, Murphy Ives was fascinated. There were Palestinian as well as Israeli students in his residence. He was one of the few non-Jewish people in his program for overseas students. He was intrigued by the diversity of cultures that he found in Jerusalem, and he learned a lot about the world from that experience.

When he returned to Montreal, Murphy Ives continued to hone his acting skills in the McGill Players, the university's musical troupe, with leading roles in critically acclaimed musicals. Although he credits his acting skills to his ability to work with a group of diverse people, drawing on the best they have to offer, to achieve often outstanding results, by the time he graduated, he had another career in mind. He knew he wanted to practice law on an international level.

He moved to the west coast of Canada to earn his bachelor of law degree from the University of British Columbia, where, in addition to the standard first year courses, he studied Chinese, Japanese, civil, public and private international law. For a semester, he studied at the Universities of Warsaw, Poland and Moscow, Russia, which, in 1987, was the capital of the USSR. Reflecting on his legal studies, Murphy Ives says he wished more law school courses focused on the interplay of different legal systems to prepare students for international careers.

After qualifying as a lawyer in Toronto, he relocated to Geneva where he received his *Diplôme d'études supérieures* in international commercial law from the Institute of International Studies at the University of Geneva. While in Switzerland he also met his wife, a Cambridge-educated Canadian national who has worked for the Canadian Embassy, the United Nations and various non-governmental organizations, like the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue.

Together they moved to Paris, where Murphy Ives trained in civil law and qualified as a French lawyer. He handled international mergers and acquisitions as an associate at Bignon Lebray. Despite enjoying his time there, he always knew he wanted to be in-house. "Being in-house means you're part of a team that's actually building something or creating a product or providing a service. As part of that team, the success of the project is partly your success. Team experience has always attracted me. In my earlier days, I was the captain of the horseback riding team and I always liked motivating a group of people towards a common goal."

Murphy Ives' first in-house job was for Eridania Béghin-Say, in Neuilly-sur-Seine, outside Paris, which he joined in 1995. The agrofood company, under the umbrella of Italy-based Montedison Group, was, among other things, the biggest olive oil company in the world. He got hands-on experience doing M&A deals around the world and exposure to various legal systems. He loved the job, but around the same time his wife was expecting their first child, and they decided they wanted to move to a smaller city.

Ottawa was on the table, and the place they met: Geneva. Murphy Ives subscribed to the Geneva paper, in the year 2000, and poured over job postings for lawyers. He is probably one of the last lawyers hired by HP through a newspaper advertisement.

At HP, he led numerous public and private M&A transactions throughout Europe, the Middle East, Africa, the United States and Asia. As he became more experienced, the opportunities grew. He was the lead legal integration manager for the Compaq merger in Europe. In 2009 he was promoted to vice president, Asia Pacific and Japan, deputy general counsel. He moved to Singapore, along with his wife and, by this time, four children.

Asia has a wide variety of approaches to the law, and different roles for lawyers, Murphy Ives says. There are countries like China, where antitrust laws are only a few years old. Some, like Australia and New Zealand, have legal systems that are very similar to those in Europe and North America. Others, like India, rely on a legal system largely implemented by the British in the 1920s and have not been significantly modified since. In fact, Murphy Ives was responsible along with the local team for creating a precedent in Indian law by leading a squeeze out of minority shareholders from HP Global Soft Ltd., a formerly Indian public company, where his team ensured the minority shareholders were treated fairly. HP's innovative approach stood up to judicial scrutiny and the case sets precedence for others. The experience prepared him to tackle Asia, where industry practice is often almost as important as the way laws are implemented.

HP rarely uses outside counsel. "The in-house team has a better knowledge of the businesses, of the strategy of the company itself," Murphy Ives says. A lot of his work focuses on streamlining processes. He looks for transactions that have a high volume and are repeatable. If the process is correct, then HP is able to handle more transactions more effectively in a consistent manner.

While in Singapore, Murphy Ives felt there was a dearth of professional associations geared toward in-house lawyers for multinational corporations. Along with others, he decided to found ACC's Singapore Chapter. The exchange of ideas, from best practices for lawyers in Singapore and the Asian region, to the simple social perspective, helped him navigate the new region.

In 2012, Murphy Ives moved back to Switzerland, with another new title : vice president, Europe Middle East & Africa (EMEA) and Latin American & Canada (LAC), deputy general counsel. He is able to continue his upward trajectory by imagining what his clients are looking for: "Put yourself in the other person's shoes. You're trying to understand the support needs that they have from legal."

Murphy Ives is concentrating on two major projects right now. HP, with its 317,000 employees, is splitting into two companies and he needs to figure out how to divide up and replicate the current corporate structure. Along the way, his team needs to incorporate new companies country by country. Asset transfers, demergers, real estate analysis and other processes are all part of the equation. In the end, the goal is to have two world class companies with two world class legal departments.

His other major goal is to keep his legal department motivated and to mentor younger lawyers. It took Murphy Ives about six months to a year to truly integrate himself into HP. "Once you've mastered one area of practice at HP, then I think from that moment on, you're able to start sharing your experiences with others so they can build on what you've done to make things better. The thing that's great about mentorship is that it's a two-way street. The mentor learns along with the mentee."

Murphy Ives has always been interested in learning about the world and sharing that knowledge with others. With his zeal for world cultures, languages and business, he is a perfect lawyer for these times.

Getting to Know... Chris Murphy Ives

WHAT IN YOUR CAREER ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

A huge source of pride for me is the team I lead of 180 lawyers and legal professionals in Europe,

Middle East & Africa (EMEA) and Latin America & Canada (LAC) on Hewlett-Packard's legal team. It is truly an honor to lead a group of such talented and diverse individuals. Their professionalism, enthusiasm and tireless drive for excellence is aptly summed up in our department motto: "Excellence – Everybody, every day!" Whether dealing with complex anti-trust law issues, supporting billion dollar outsourcing agreements or dealing with ethics and compliance issues in some of the most challenging jurisdictions in the world, I never fail to be inspired and proud.

In addition to being innovative and consummate professionals, they are people with whom I sincerely enjoy spending time outside the professional context as well. No matter where they are from in the nearly 100 countries within the region, they are consistently intelligent, articulate and enjoy a good laugh while working in a stimulating international environment. I am very lucky indeed and am extremely proud to lead the HP EMEA & LAC legal team.

HOW DO YOU STAY FRESH?

It helps to have interests outside of work — things that force you to take a broader perspective on life. You could have had the worst day in the world, but when I come home and my six-year-old daughter reads me a story or shows me a picture that she did for me today, and she says, "I love you, Daddy," it makes me melt. It automatically puts everything into perspective and the blood pressure goes down, literally. I think that helps a lot. Getting a good night sleep helps, as well.

In addition, working in an international environment is also stimulating and energizing. I also try to surround myself with people who tend to see the positive or potential in situations or others. I try to frame situations that others see as negative, or sub-optimal, as opportunities. If you are able to achieve this, you're able to take the issues that life throws at you with a little more serenity and hope.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR HOBBIES?

I try to get some exercise in different ways, either going to the gym or for a run, like I did when we lived in Singapore, or skiing like we try to do with the family most weekends in the winter now that we are back in Switzerland. Speaking of the family, having four kids, ages six to 14, also keeps you running and busy. Although my kids would hate me saying so, I actually really enjoy helping them with their homework or assignments. My parents were both teachers, so I guess it comes naturally.

Otherwise, eating healthily, trying to move around during the day, using a desk which rises so I can work standing from time-to-time is also good for the posture. Good ergonomics is something to bear in mind given the hours we spend at work. And basically trying to get outdoors and enjoy nature as much as possible are things that energize me. Finally, a love of animals is something my parents instilled in me from an early age. Our dog, Gatsby, is always looking for a walk. Our cats make no qualms about needing their fair share of attention. Our kids horseback ride, and I relish the opportunity to watch them when time permits. Physical health, time with the family, a love of nature and animals all work together to keep me connected to different, but important, aspects of what life has to offer.

[Joshua H. Shields](#)



Editor

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