

Jenna Adamson

Legal Counsel at L'Oréal A/NZ

Damiano Fritz, Lawyer at Clayton Utz, chats with **Jenna Adamson**, Legal Counsel at L'Oréal A/NZ about Jenna's career and her thoughts on International Women's Day.

Jenna spent 8 at MinterEllison before transitioning to L'Oréal in the middle of 2019. Jenna supports the eCommerce-focused CMO team and embraces the intersection between digital transformation and the law (including as leader of the Communications Portfolio for the newly-formed Digital Law Association).

DAMIANO FRITZ: What does a typical day look like for you?

JENNA ADAMSON: Each day in-house with L'Oréal A/NZ is next-level indescribable and, as stereotypical as it may sound for an in-house legal counsel, no two days are the same.

By way of example I deal with at least 10-15 matters each day on any- and everything (no understatement), including across areas of competition and consumer law (including the evolving area of eCommerce, digital and social media), privacy, data and IT security, property and construction law, international law, IP law and general corporate/commercial matters.

Across our 30 brands, I individually partner with our leading CMO team, which places me at the forefront of legal digital transformation within our corporate functions such as operations/supply chain, procurement, HR, communications, media, finance. This enables me to solve problems across all pockets of the organisation, as well as to help manage major projects insofar as legal (and in most instances reputational and commercial) risk is concerned.

I also partner closely with our Active Cosmetics Division (including brands such as SkinCeuticals and La Roche Posay), which is our fastest growing division in the organisation, with a strong expertise in science and beauty tech and a commitment to social causes which absolutely



resonates with me ('Health is the future of beauty').

We are always working towards advancing our team's legal innovation and operations as we continually assess and brainstorm how we can do things differently including collaborating with our legal tech vendors to, for example, build and improve our 15 legal Apps on a platform that empowers the business to 'self serve' on routine legal tasks, or by building a chat bot (called 'Lippy') that helps our business better navigate and self-service certain key legal documents, guidelines and playbooks.

In addition to L'Oréal A/NZ, I am the Communications Lead for the newly-formed Digital Law

Association, where I connect with some of the most exceptional women and have the opportunity to raise awareness of how we approach the uptake of technology globally – on any given day of course I manage the Association's external communications ie our Instagram, LinkedIn and Facebook accounts which is naturally the perfect complement to best serve the world's leading beauty company.

FRITZ: How do you unplug from work?

ADAMSON: The million dollar question [*laughs*] – work ethic and conscientiousness are often a given for legal professionals, so I do believe that what is determinative of 'switching off' is one's mindset at the end of the day (when the

reality is there will always be unanswered emails and outstanding tasks). It has only been in the past few years (and perhaps even more during the pandemic) that I have grown confident in not only setting, but staying true to, my personal boundaries. Like all of us, I am the best version of myself when I am at the top of my game mentally, emotionally, spiritually, physically and socially – so I do need to self-regulate often and know what my non-negotiables are. Movement each day is a must, whether it be Pilates or even just getting outside for a walk (ideally with the sun and a decent podcast or music) - it's something that I cannot afford to compromise on (which aligns with decent sleep and nutrition). Similarly, I choose very carefully whom I spend my spare time with and it's those loved ones that give me life and ground me at the end of the day.

To be honest, the ability to 'unplug' has always been a challenge of sorts for me (and it is certainly easier to master sometimes more than others) but I have grown to accept that we are doing our best each day and that is enough (and perhaps more than enough for those like myself with 'perfectionist' tendencies) – so own it and live your life beyond your occupation.

FRITZ: What's the greatest risk you've taken as a professional?

ADAMSON: Given that I was certainly a 'law firm baby' of sorts and had specialised in property law for the majority of my career (not to mention the very niche area of leasing), my biggest career risk would have been the move in-house.

I was a Senior Associate at MinterEllison in Brisbane (where I was fortunate to work with the best clients and an incredible team) and resigned to take up a 12 month contract in-house for L'Oréal A/NZ in Melbourne. It's said that: *"One of the biggest fallacies about change is that it can only come from a place of restless dissatisfaction."* You can love your life (or job in this case) and choose to change it in any way,

just because you want to. It was certainly one of those moments where I discovered how valuable fear can be – it was a real concern for me having not had experience in other areas before this in-house role – yet in hindsight that has been the least of my concerns.

Of course it would have been more convenient to have more in-house experience, but it has by no means held me back. I have developed and worked to perfect the technical and soft skills that any lawyer is expected to have in private practice and, although at the time I may have taken them for granted, I am now appreciative that they have formed the best foundation for my in-house career and are second nature: attention to detail, articulate use of language and communication skills, drafting, time management, research and the like.

FRITZ: What advice would you give to the next generation of female leaders in the industry?

ADAMSON: Own it – own who you are, own what you do, and how you do it.

I'm currently managing our A/NZ legal team's first in-house clerk, Betty, as part of the ACC Australia & The Learned Crew's drive to create in-house clerkship opportunities in addition to the traditional law firm path, and there is nothing more inspiring to me than seeing Betty empowered and owning who she is as a person and her abilities as a lawyer and partner to our business.

FRITZ: If you could have dinner with any woman – living or passed, real or fictional – who would it be and why?

ADAMSON: My answer for this absolutely changes over time! At this stage, I would say Brene Brown – for those who are not familiar with her, Brene is a phenomenal woman who I believe leads the way in her research into vulnerability, courage, shame and empathy.

One of my most valuable mentors who is always close to my heart introduced me to Brene's work when I was at somewhat of a turning

point in my life, both personally and professionally, and understanding my earlier 'wiring' or 'conditioning' of sorts was key to my future growth: *"Owning our story and loving ourselves through that process is the bravest thing we'll ever do"*.

I personally have taken so much from Brene's work and it has truly shaped who I am today and how I do now own my story. That said, it is an ever-evolving process: truth be told I am a not-quite-yet recovered perfectionist, but I challenge myself each and every day to continue to grow.

Brene's research helps me navigate my mindset amidst that (because it certainly isn't easy – but that's why I love it) so, of course, a dinner with her on a personal and self-developmental level would be incredible, not to mention the opportunity to explore her own personal development and those she has interviewed as part of her research.

FRITZ: If there is one thing you would celebrate about International Women's Day in our industry, what would it be?

ADAMSON: First and foremost, the empowerment and collaboration of women – that's a given, but perhaps if we go further, we as women are beginning to no longer recognised by our occupation alone but rather who we are as people. While there is always further room for improvement (#growthmindset), I do believe that we are now recognised as women and people, not only on a more even scale, but as our wholehearted selves - including those traits that were traditionally perceived as 'weaknesses' like empathy, emotional intelligence, self-regulation and self-care, or being mindset-oriented. That has taken a world of growth in what was formerly a less-diverse and more conservative industry where our collective commitment (all-inclusive – not women only) to face our fears and be our authentic selves has helped to erode any earlier misconceptions and break down stereotypes.