

Miranda Duigan

Principal Legal Counsel, Foxtel

Anjali Nadaradjane, Lawyer in the Disputes Resolution (Intellectual Property) team at MinterEllison sits down with **Miranda Duigan**, Principal Legal Counsel at Foxtel Group (**Foxtel**), to discuss her career and thoughts on International Women's Day. Miranda and her team have responsibility for providing legal support for all of the entertainment content acquisition and strategy teams across Foxtel Group.

ANJALI NADARADJANE: What inspired you to pursue your career path? Did you always want this job?

MIRANDA DUIGAN: I was always interested in the impact of the media – the importance of news and the power of film and television to tell amazing and inspiring stories. I studied media law and IP at the University of Melbourne, and from that knew that I wanted to work in those fields. I worked for a couple of large law firms in Melbourne and Sydney, which were fabulous places to learn, but when I saw an opportunity to go in house at Foxtel in 1998 I took it, becoming one of a small team of four lawyers (one of whom is still our Chief General Counsel today, Lynette Ireland). Foxtel was a young company at the time and an exciting place to be. I could see the potential of pay TV after living and working in the UK and the US during a gap year half way through my degree. From working at Foxtel, I was able to transfer across to the in-house team at Sky UK (known as BSkyB at the time) in London, which was again a huge learning experience both professionally and personally. When it was time to move back to Australia, Foxtel was the logical place. Like Sky, Foxtel had grown immensely and become a much bigger, multi-faceted media company, and is still an exciting place to be.

ANJALI: What are some of the most important lessons you have learned during your career? And what is one thing you know now about women and work that you wish you had known earlier in your career?

MIRANDA: Firstly, learn as much as you can about the areas that sit alongside and complement your role – for me this means program acquisitions, channel operations,

technology, finance and tax to name a few. Maths is your friend! The more you understand about the context around you, the better placed you are to see the bigger picture and to provide commercial advice that is valued by your stakeholders. Secondly – relish being thrown in the deep end. It will be uncomfortable but ultimately worthwhile. You can learn a huge amount from more experienced advisors who may be acting for the other side. Finally and most importantly – good relationships with people inside and outside your business are key to getting things done, and as we spend so many of our waking hours working, we should make it as enjoyable as possible.

Throughout my career I have been lucky enough to work with many women in leadership positions, each with their own management style. I have seen that there are different approaches to balancing family and a career and there is no right or wrong way to do this – you have to work out the best way for you in your circumstances. And don't assume that you can't take on work or a role that you think needs more experience, skills or time than you have. From my experience, employers are more flexible than you might expect.

ANJALI: Do you have a favourite quote or mantra that inspires and motivates you?

MIRANDA: My mother taught me to never say no to an opportunity, you never know where it may take you. Keep saying yes for as long as possible. Saying yes was how I ended up doing a secondment at Tata Sky in India (now Tata Play) for example, which was a life changing experience.



ANJALI: What developments and challenges are emerging in your field? How do you keep up with these changes?

MIRANDA: Keeping across the regulatory framework for media companies such as Foxtel Group is a constant challenge, whether it relates to privacy, advertising, anti-siphoning, Australian content requirements, consumer protections or international sanctions. I am lucky to be able to lean on the regulatory specialists within our legal team, and also on our external advisors, but individually we do have to keep up to date by using as many resources as possible.

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

MIRANDA: Marie Colvin, the incredibly brave foreign correspondent who was killed in Syria in 2012. She was an American journalist who worked for The Sunday Times in the UK, and was known for bringing attention to the suffering of civilians in the worst conflict zones from the 1980s until 2012. Ultimately she lost her life doing that. I would like to hear all her stories and how she found the courage to report from war zones where most others would not. The work that journalists do is so important and I think we almost take it for granted now.

ANJALI: Let's talk about leadership. What do you think is the most important piece of advice for women who want to pursue a career as a leader? What do you think are the best ways for young women to develop leadership skills today?

MIRANDA: I think the best way to develop leadership skills is by doing. Challenge yourself to step outside of your comfort zone to see what you are capable of and how you can bring people along with you. Also, leadership is not just about managing other people. Some of the best leaders I work with do not have anyone reporting to them. It's about how they go about their role and how they contribute. I was once told that authority is not given, it is taken, which I think has been good advice. This does not mean be a dictator but it reminds me that success is something that is created by your own design. Make your own way and back yourself.

ANJALI: How do you continue to learn (both professionally and personally) and expand your knowledge?

MIRANDA: I think one of the main reasons that I'm still working at Foxtel Group after such a long time is that we are constantly being challenged with new business models, products and technologies. Being in-house, we have direct access to people working in roles of all descriptions, across broadcast operations, strategy, content production, marketing, IT and content security to name a few. Every week I'm learning something new from them or from the industry in general. Foxtel Group also offers more structured learning opportunities such as coaching circles and training in specific skills such as public speaking. We also have regular opportunities to tap into the experience of our senior women via the Fox Squad initiative.

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

MIRANDA: I took a career break in 2009 and travelled around South America on my own, learning Spanish in Argentina and how to surf in Brazil. I had been working at Sky UK for about nine years and had

a fantastic role there, so I was very nervous about giving that up. I was pleasantly surprised though when my manager was prepared to give me a year's sabbatical. It taught me to keep in mind that there may be more options and ways of achieving your goals than you expect. And in the end, I think taking a break helped rather than hindered my career.

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

MIRANDA: I think that it takes a great team to create good leaders so find a role where you are surrounded by people who you respect and who can inspire you to do better. The pressure on media companies to operate efficiently is only going to increase so you will need to work out how to lead in a way that best leverages your skills and the people around you. As our industry will continue to evolve at pace, I would invest in building strong relationships and networks which will help you navigate those changes.

ANJALI: What are the ways you stay grounded and take care of yourself?

MIRANDA: Spending time with my family is the best way to come back to reality after an intense period of work, kids have a wonderful knack of helping you put everything in perspective (their perspective that is!). My favourite way to decompress is to go for a late afternoon swim at Bondi, or run (walk) around Centennial Park. My number one priority for taking care of myself is getting more sleep. However, this continues to be a challenge with the constant stream of amazing and addictive television to watch – an occupational hazard!