



Season 2, Episode 5 – Human Resources / Consulting

**Gretchen Moxcey, Partner & Chief Human Resources Officer, KPMG Lower Gulf
Stacie Berdan, International Careers Expert (Podcast Host)**

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Stacie Berdan:

Welcome to the Global Careers Podcast sponsored by GW-CIBER! THE source for inspiring stories from seasoned professionals who have embraced a global role and reaped the benefits. We offer practical advice and insider tips across a broad swath of industries and fields around the world. Whether or not you've considered moving abroad or taking on an international role, globalization will impact your career. So join us for a lively discussion as we explore what an international career really means. My name is Stacie Nevadomski Berdan and I'll be your host! In Season 2 we find ourselves in a fast-changing world still affected by the pandemic where we must adapt to succeed. Come with us as we share with you how to craft your place in the new global work space. Today, I have the pleasure of interviewing Gretchen Moxcey - Partner & Chief Human Resources Officer at KPMG Lower Gulf – where she leads the People, Performance, and Culture function in support of over 1700 partners and employees in the UAE and Oman. She moved to Dubai earlier this year with her husband. Gretchen has three decades of human resources experiences, including 20 years in the big four in professional services, most recently serving as Managing Director for Deloitte, delivering talent strategy and programs between the US and India. Gretchen and I have known each other for more than 15 years and she was one of the first women who contributed to my first book. Welcome Gretchen, it's a pleasure to have you here!

Gretchen Moxcey:

Stacie, thank you so much for inviting me to be on your podcast today. I'm a big fan of GW as you know, and I appreciate the opportunity to share my story with everyone.

Stacie Berdan:

Wonderful! So, let's get started! One of the objectives of this podcast is to provide a sense of the global careers that are out there. Tell us about your career journey and your new role at KPMG.

Gretchen Moxcey:

Sure. I'm a Partner and Chief Human Resources Officer at KPMG Lower Gulf, and, as you know, KPMG is a global firm. It's one of the big four accounting, tax, and advisory firms, and our firm serves clients across the countries of the UAE and Oman and we are based in three cities which include Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Muscat. And I'm based in Dubai and I'm the first woman on our Executive Committee. So, I work with our Executive Committee, our Board of Directors, and partners from across our firm to make our people strategy a success. So, in my role, some of the projects that I'm focused on are things like a comprehensive hybrid work program that enables our people to have flexibility around where they work, and the times that they work, and the space that they work in; to new refreshed policies for our global workforce, because they comprise over 78 countries and nationalities; and technology that enables our people to have robust touch points throughout their entire employee life cycle. So those are some of the things that I'm involved with in my role, and I moved to Dubai just seven months ago. It was a big move for me and I did it because I was really interested in a full immersion global experience. For me that's the ultimate challenge in one's career. I was an expat in London early on in my career, as you know, and I've worked all over the globe, including many years in and out of India. And I've always enjoyed my experiences, you know, learning about new cultures, and new countries, new languages... And Dubai is one of the most innovative, progressive, and impressive cities I've ever been to. So, I was excited to have this next opportunity, and it has really exceeded all of my expectations and then some so far.



Stacie Berdan:

Wow, this is so exciting. But what a crazy time to pick up and move from, as you said, Dallas to Dubai! What kind of challenges did you face in just the move, and what tips do you have for people considering such a move these days?

Gretchen Moxcey:

Yeah, It was certainly a crazy time to move, kind of in the midst of the pandemic... But I would say, you know, generally, for anyone who is looking to make a global move – the research and preparation are key. I would recommend doing as much of that as you can up front, before you select your move. There is so much information on the internet of course – you can read through that, chatbots – I'd read through those, listen to podcast, watch YouTube... All of these things are going to help you to gain insights before you arrive. And then, once you arrive, my advice is to be open to anything and everything. You know, come with an open mind, with agility, and curiosity, I think those are the keys to success. Everything you thought you knew was quite likely to be different once you arrive. So those are helpful tips.

Stacie Berdan:

That's wonderful. For students interested in your industry, Gretchen, what are the greatest opportunities and/or challenges, besides the pandemic, that you see today and those that you see coming down the pike in the next few years?

Gretchen Moxcey:

Yeah, I'd say the greatest opportunity with KPMG and our industry of professional services is to serve the top companies across the globe. And you will gain incredible exposure to the myriad of challenges that our clients face and have an opportunity to deliver value with insights, and advice. Some of the challenges that..., you know, probably more the obvious ones that you might face are with things like language barriers, and time zone differences, and cultural differences and nuances... But the bigger-picture challenges are working in an extremely fast-paced, multifaceted, and dynamic environment, where technological advances have significant impact on businesses. Every business is also trying to determine their role with environmental, social, and corporate governance, which you now is the ESG, and that has become a huge challenge depending on how you view things. You know, both a challenge and an opportunity really.

Stacie Berdan:

Hm... What do you think this means for new hires, like most of our listeners who are graduating or in the first two years of their career... Specifically, what kind of tips, what kind of things can they do to prepare?

Gretchen Moxcey:

I think for new hires the learning and development is critical in your first few years. For example, your personal investment in developing technology skills that companies use, like cybersecurity or cloud computing, AI and machine learning, virtual reality, blockchain... I think those are all critically important in today's world, either to learn them from a technology perspective itself, or as a user technology, or someone who advises on technology. I think also having advanced degrees like an MBA, specifically for us in the advisory business it comes into play, and accreditation like CPA in the US or ACCA here in the Middle East, if you want to be an accountant. These are all things that I would suggest students think about in their first few years of their career.

Stacie Berdan:

So those are some good technical skills, if you will. What are some other skills, critical for new hires in your field? Are there others besides what you've mentioned?



Gretchen Moxcey:

Yeah, I think, you know, the obvious one is probably going to be language skills, right... So, for example, here in the Middle East while everyone speaks English and you can work very effectively here with just English, Arabic is a huge bonus. Less obvious would be excellent networking skills, influencing skills, and resilience skills. These are all some of the keys that we don't talk about as much, but they are critically valuable and they become even more valuable as you get on through your career.

Stacie Berdan:

So true. And those sound like global skills as well, not just in one particular region or country, but those would be beneficial to anyone working around the world in various markets I assume, right.

Gretchen Moxcey:

Absolutely, yeah. I think these are skills that you can take with you anywhere. The world is becoming a smaller place.

Stacie Berdan:

Absolutely. So, on that note, you know, we witnessed quite a few changes in the workplace this past year, past few years – things such as remote work, hybrid schedules, technology, automation, you've named those... Tell me about one of them a little bit more deeply. You know, get a little granular with us, how do you see it directly affecting the future of work?

Gretchen Moxcey:

Well, for me, in what I do in the field of Human Resources, changes in technology as they relate to HR is one area that I am very passionate about. They are so many ways in which we can leverage technology to improve the experience of our people who join our firm. So, for example, we can use chatbots to interact with new hires, to answer a myriad of questions they might have, so they have answers on their fingertips 24/7, whenever they want to find those answers. Or, a reward and recognition app – that will keep new hires engaged and motivated because we are recognizing them and rewarding their efforts in real time and in an easy manner. I find that people want choices and flexibility today. And through technology we can use this to help us meet these goals. And it links to our employee life cycle – from hire to retire – and it really enhances the future of work and our employee experience overall.

Stacie Berdan:

Ah, that's fascinating, it's a really interesting way to think about, how technology plays a role in HR when many people may think they don't need to understand tech... But certainly, those apps, as well as the other elements of technology really do affect the workforce these days. Those are some interesting trends. Are there any others that you see, beyond your own company, region, industry. What else do you see on the horizon that students need to be aware of and prepared for?

Gretchen Moxcey:

You know, I'm going to stay on the technology theme for a moment, Stacie, because I think this is so significant and it's important for students to think about how technology is disrupting the workforce. Roles are being automated, which means roles are changing, right... And they may not be changing today or tomorrow or 5-10 years down the road, but they are changing. In some places they are changing rapidly, in some places they are changing over time. So it's important to take some time to understand how your career interests are influenced by these changes, so that you can understand what that role will look like in the future and what you will need to do to prepare for that. So, for example, critical thinking skills will be exceptionally valuable as automation cannot replace those types of skills. Also digital skills will be very important for things like data analysis. So it's important to understand what you think your career interests are today, how they'll evolve, and how you can adapt alongside that and understand, you know, what it will become as part of the future.



Stacie Berdan:

So interesting, it makes me want to be an entry-level worker again so I can go down the path. That's great. So, Gretchen, you have worked on an international scale for years, having a front-row seat to the rise and evolution of globalization, right... So, as an HR leader, how has globalization affected the workplace? And what can listeners, specifically students who may not think they want or need an international career – what do they need to address the changes in globalization and how it affects them?

Gretchen Moxcey:

I think it means... first of all, you can do global work from anywhere, right. Global roles are more available to students, which I think is huge, because when I started my career 30 years ago that wasn't the case. In the past, full immersion may have been the only way to pursue a global role. Now that the world is much smaller – that's not the only way. So, I think that everyone benefits from that and that's really important for students to be thinking about. They can have those opportunities and, you know, pursue different pieces of it depending on where their interests are. Contingent workforce is come about as a huge sourcing opportunity as part of globalization so you can also little bit of try before you buy in many case, right. Take on shorter-stint roles for whether is 3 to 6 months, or 1 to 3 years, and see if this is an organization you really want to be a part of longer term. And you can try that in different places regardless of where you are based or you can travel to those roles. But because contingent workforce and that movement is more of a contractor-type of status, it gives people flexibility to try and travel and see the world and do things that weren't opportunities necessarily in the past.

Stacie Berdan:

Wonderful. What advice do you wish you'd been given at the beginning of your career? You know, what lessons do you have to share there?

Gretchen Moxcey:

I think I have a lot of lessons, Stacie. I'd say the first, and I think about this a lot, with eager, motivated, smart students who want to join our firm and make an impact, add value – I would advise everyone to be as humble as you can be when you come into a firm and you're learning and you're curious. No job is too big or too small, it's about your ability to integrate and be flexible and show your skills and, you know, be part of the team and the culture. Fully immerse yourself into that. And I think, when I started, I was so eager to make an impact that it's easy to lose sight of these things. So that's the first piece of advice I would say. The second that I've learned is that the data is so important, the data tells the story for whatever it is that you are trying to do. I don't care what industry, what field you're in, but if you are trying to be impactful in your role, focus on the data, because that's how we can explain what's most important to an organization, what the trends look like, where we need to be, all different types of, you know, competitive best practices... So that's the power behind the story. With the data it makes it easy to showcase or deliver value in whatever way you want to. And then, I think the third piece of advice that comes to mind for me is I do a lot of presentations and presenting can be really stressful. When I started in my career I was a facilitator, delivering programs for a consumer bank environment. And, presentations can be really stressful, but I learned the art and the science of that over time. I still get stressed out, it doesn't matter what the presentation is, but what makes it a little easier is when I've taken the time to get to know my audience in advance, and what's important to them, whether it's a large audience or a small audience like today. For example, I spend a lot of time on who my key clients are, our leaders in the firm, our executive committee... So before I go into those meetings and presentations and proposals, I do what I call 'work the room' – you know, I meet each person individually, I spend some time with them, I try to get to know what's most important to them, what's top of mind, what they want to get out of whatever it is that I'm bringing forward in my time with them. So, by the time I get to the room I've already done my job really, because I've spoken to everyone. And it takes much longer to do that, but that's a big piece of advice I wish someone had given me when I started out. So those are three things, you know – humility is key, data-driven insights, and work the room before you get to a particular presentation.



Stacie Berdan:

That's excellent advice. And you really kind of drilled a little bit on the whole networking, right. People say networking, networking, but you really described how to do that, in a presentation setting of course, but that's excellent advice, thanks for that. Tell me, what's it like to live in Dubai? You went from Connecticut, to Texas, to Dubai... what's it like, what's one of the differences? Tell us what it's like to be there.

Gretchen Moxcey:

Dubai is so incredibly amazing. It is innovative and progressive, and exciting. They want to be the first and at the forefront of everything. So even recently with the pandemic and the vaccines – I think it's one of the top-5 countries in the world for having the highest vaccination statistics – that's one example. Another example is – it's a highly technology driven country. So there are all sorts of apps that are used to show your identification or your vaccination status or that you could pay all your bills with a touch of a button and they load right into your bank account. You don't even have to do that, it's all set up for you. So these make it very easy to do business here or just work here on a personal level. And then I'd say there's so much excitement. I mean, right now in Dubai, UAE is hosting the EXPO 2020, which is taking place over the next 6 months, and so all countries across the globe are hosting what they want to showcase here right now. You know, all about advancements in sustainability. And that's super exciting. They have the Dubai Eye, which is the largest Ferris wheel in the world, that's just opened up, and the Burj Khalifa – the tallest building in the world. So there's so much to do here. I've been eating my way through Dubai; there's 8100 restaurants, so I feel I'll be keeping myself busy for many years to come with all of that. You know, and because everything is technology driven today, even now I'm so many miles away from home I am able to keep in touch with my older children through BOTIM, you know, which is kind of the same as Facetime. It just makes it so easy to stay in touch. Some of the ways that Dubai is similar to Texas, you know, Texas strives to have everything bigger and better – there's a little bit of that mantra here, and competitive spirit. So, I enjoy that. And also the weather is fabulous. I mean, it's probably high 80s early 90s right now, so I'm enjoying that. I live on the beach and it's easy to get around and go to different beaches, so in my spare time I get some fresh air and, you know, just focus on that wellbeing. So, Dubai is a fabulous place to live and work.

Stacie Berdan:

Oh, sold! I think my bags are packed. Yes, that sounds fantastic. Thanks for sharing that. So great... before we wrap up, is there anything that you'd like to add for our listeners?

Gretchen Moxcey:

Oh boy... Well, I could probably go on for hours Stacie! I'd say, you know, the last thing just for all our students who may be listening and you're thinking about your careers and a global role in the future – I think the most important thing is just to have fun. It's so important to love what you do. If you're not having fun you're probably in the wrong role. Let your heart and intuition guide you, and remember that work is not the end or the all. It's so important to focus on your wellbeing, however you define that, whether that's health or fitness, friends and family... You know, make sure you're taking time for you, and defining boundaries that will lend to and support that balance for you. So I think that's the last thing I'd say, Stacie. Something that I've learned over time, for sure.

Stacie Berdan:

That's great advice, wonderful. Thank you so much, Gretchen. It's been an absolute pleasure to have you on and really enjoyed catching up. Thanks!

Gretchen Moxcey:

Same here, Stacie! Thank you.

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Stacie Berdan: You have been listening to the GW-CIBER Global Careers podcast. Join us again next time, and in the meantime – go global!