



Season 5, Episode 4 – Women in Global Careers

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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 5, we focus on women in global careers: the challenges and opportunities and how things have evolved over the last few years. Join us as we hear from eight global women as they share their inspiring stories working around the world in such fields as tech, diplomacy, investing, marketing and so much more. Today, I have the pleasure of interviewing a dynamic woman, Casey Carlson – Managing Director at Deloitte, who leads their Real Estate Strategy and Workplace Design. Although she launched her career in accounting at Deloitte, she shifted to HR, focusing on talent, immigration policy, and global mobility. Based in Boston, Casey spends a great deal of her time in India, and she's pretty excited about her latest role. Welcome, Casey, great to have you with us.

Casey Carlson:

Thank you.

Stacie Berdan:

Alright... So you are enjoying a stellar career at Deloitte, where you began in accounting. Now you're in HR... As someone who has made several career switches at Deloitte, how did your experience working as a tax consultant in the beginning – Senior Manager of Talent, Managing Director of Talent and immigration, all of that – prepare you for your current role now?

Casey Carlson:

Stacey, it's so interesting to think about beginning my career as an audit intern and then joining the Tax Practice at Deloitte. I knew in graduate school that I probably didn't want to be a tax accountant, but I was really interested in how policy and business choices impact human behavior. So, I feel very fortunate to have been able to take that over into these other roles. But, I am glad that I'm grounded in that fundamental accounting and finance business knowledge, so that's been very important throughout my career. It's also a big part of our organization – accounting and then consulting. I think, the other roles... so, as a talent leader, either for a geography and a group of people, or a topical talent leader – whether that's immigration or diversity, equity, and inclusion – that talent experience, and again, understanding those humans and how our choices affect outcomes and productivity and aligned to business strategy. So both of those have been really important. I think what's been interesting, and as I've gotten to know your organization thought about a lot is just global experience. There's the experience of travel, and being in other countries, but there's also the experience of being in roles that have a global lens, that you work with global colleagues and contacts in... And so that's been very important as I move into real estate. Real estate, and this idea



of what will the workplace be, I think is one of our most important questions of our time, certainly coming out of COVID. But I think it was a question we were already trying to figure out, which is, how will humans work? So if we know what type of work in our organization that we want to sell to our clients and provide and advise our clients on, and we then translate that to what type of workforce do we need, the workplace really has to support all of that. So, I go back to being an intern that came into the office every day, and now being a managing director that can work from home or the airport or an office or a client. Really, this idea of what will the workplace ecosystem be requires all of my experience and background?

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, that's so cool. And I'm really glad that you mentioned... a little earlier on you said something about being grounded in those accounting and business skills – that really is super important, because you really have to have to understand the business of business in order to then branch out into real estate strategy or workplace design or sustainability. So that's cool. So that's cool. So, with respect to workplace design and sustainability, how has the field evolved, especially in the last few years, and where are there opportunities in the future for our listeners?

Casey Carlson:

This is another exciting part of my industry. So if you think about commercial real estate, there has been for many years a focus on LEED certification. So is the building sustainable and what are the elements of sustainability within a building? What I'm seeing already, and I think what we will see in the future, is a more holistic view. So how does again the workplace support the human? And so whether that's well-being, whether that's the energy choices that we make (and by that I mean, where does our electricity come from, how was it created), whether that's looking at commuting and where we choose to bring our people together in the workplace (and what that means for their commute), whether that's the embedded design decisions that we make for the workplace (so, including natural elements, like wood and plants, being mindful about putting an internal staircase so that people will get up and walk throughout your space). So, I think it's really this switch from certifying a building as being sustainable to very mindfully looking across your talent, and your real estate choices, to create an experience that's focused on sustainability and wellbeing.

Stacie Berdan:

Oh, that's really neat. What an exciting, exciting role you've got there. That's cool. And I know you've spent a lot of time in India, right? Can you shed some light, what it's like to work there, how you've had to adapt to different cultural differences and nuances, things you've learned, tips, that kind of thing?

Casey Carlson:

I can try, India's amazing, that's what I would say, full stop. And it has been interesting to be in India over the last decade plus. I enjoy being in India for so many different reasons, it's been very important to my career. Here... our U.S. organization, half of our people are here in the U.S. and half are based in India. So, it is really just an incredible partnership. When I'm there, it is my colleagues that make all the difference – that in the early days helped me learn to navigate the country, the city, the offices, the nuances, and now have become my close friends, to really appreciate and take advantage of the culture, to advance our business, and understand similarities and differences so that we can do that. And I guess I would just say, Stacie, that spending time with that team, and with the leaders has been really paramount. The relationships are the key. After my first trip to India, that became so apparent and obvious. And we probably could be more mindful about the same here in the U.S., but just really watching my colleagues and teams and the country evolve has been exciting. So, I would say my lessons learned are we're more alike than we are different. And making your work colleagues your work friends is very important. Probably in any experience in any country, not just India.



Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, wow. And 50-50 split. That's, that's amazing. So, so many times there's this dynamic tension, right, there's a headquarters and there's a smaller satellite office and that the satellite office strives to be heard. But that's obviously not the case here. So they're almost like equal partners I mean, do you see that kind of a tension?

Casey Carlson:

That's a really interesting question. So for the U.S. and India, I would say that it's very seamless that the partnership between the two and the support of common objectives, but I was thinking about this a little bit, where I do see what I would call smart tensions is in our global organizations. So, Deloitte is a global firm, and we have what we call member firms. And so for example, there could be nuances or differing needs between the Americas and Asia pack. Or there could be smart tensions within countries in the Americas – Brazil may need something different than Canada. So, we have a part of our organization, what we call our global group, that is really charged with ensuring that we have consistency across what we call the "green dot", that's our brand, so consistency across the green dot – the audit process and outcomes in Japan are at that same level and consistent with the way we approach audit again, in Canada or somewhere else – but that we don't lose the specialness of each country. So I would call it smart tensions. And I think we see it maybe not between the U.S. and India, but I've definitely observed the same with other countries and with what we call other member firms.

Stacie Berdan:

I like that term and I'm going to co-opt it and use it – smart tensions. So you have just described a massive organization, right, Deloitte is huge and all over the world... One of the most popular questions I get from students is how do you find a mentor? How do you do that in such a big organization?

Casey Carlson:

It's such a good question and it's so important. So I'll share my experience here at Deloitte and then my two cents on it as well. So we work from a premise of you own your career. But as you said, it's a huge organization. And so, there are some things that we do very prescriptively. And then, I think with mentoring, there's an element of it that has to be naturally formed. So, on the organization side, we ensure that everyone who joins has both an onboarding buddy, and that every professional at Deloitte has a coach. And so, your onboarding buddy is helping you figure out how to navigate this place in your early days, your coach sticks with you in that to provide your performance management feedback, and talks with you about your career. Sometimes that person is also your manager, but often, they are not. Again, mentoring, I think, requires a more naturally formed relationship, and I've seen that over the years in Talent. I've been part of project teams where we've tried to be prescriptive about mentoring, and while you can figure out all the steps that someone should need to take, it really comes down to the relationship. So, my advice is that generally people like to talk about themselves. And that most people will welcome an introductory conversation. And during that conversation, it's each of our opportunity to learn about that person's career, and understand maybe how they navigated the organization, and start to look for that person that could serve as a mentor. And what I tell each person that's sort of on that journey, looking for their mentors, is to ask at the end of that conversation for one or two additional contacts that either you can use their name and say "Casey sent me and I'd like to know more about you", or they can make an introduction for you. But I found generally people like to talk about themselves. And then, within those conversations, there's often that person you find that says "Well, Casey, it sounds like you need to do X, and how about in two weeks, we talk about what you did with that" – and there you've found your mentor, maybe a little more naturally. So, I think Stacie, we can be prescriptive and get the steps for finding a mentor, but then there's a bit of a hunt to find that person that you feel that connection with, and that has the time and inclination to connect with you and support you.



Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, that's great advice. And it's true. I mean, I think that's why it's the question that's asked so much. You can't really have a 1-2-3-4 step strategy really... You gave some great tips, but if the chemistry is not there, the person is not willing... yeah, it doesn't work. So, just kind of also have faith and just keep putting yourself out there. I love that – asking other people questions, because we all do like to talk about ourselves. What, um, what trends do you see in HR now, specifically for those listeners who are interested in a career in HR?

Casey Carlson:

When I moved into this role, I found it interesting how much that the Workplace Design leader and now the Real Estate Strategy leader (what I would call a Talent person in-hiding)... and I don't think that that's unique to me even though that's my background... I think we're really circling around a moment in time when human resources, learning and development, real estate, facilities management, your marketing and content creators, change management, subject experts are all going to need to come together to enhance the employees' experience relative to the organization. So, while we'll continue to see nuances, and we're seeing them right now in the marketplace, where the employee-employer dynamic sets and resets and the power dynamic between the two set and reset, we're seeing a shift in the workplace and people will likely, where they're able, not want to come in to work behind a closed door and do individual work, we will come together for meaningful reasons. And so, all of these different groups, HR, but all of these other groups will need to come together to support that. So I think, if I look out on the horizon for HR, it's really about partnering across the business. I think HR has been very fortunate to rise in its relevance and elevate at the table with the CEO, so that's fantastic. But that then requires partnering to support business strategy.

Stacie Berdan:

Great tips, great advice, good advice. What is one of the most challenging issues that you have faced in your career thus far and how did you deal with it?

Casey Carlson:

I find organizational transformation both challenging and exciting. And to put some definition around that – that could be exciting, planned changes, the transformation of a talent organization to better utilize technology and enable your efforts through technology, or that could be an unplanned change. COVID has happened, a recession has happened, something has occurred, that requires a change to your organization. So, I've always tried to take a lens of this is going to be challenging, you don't know how it might end, especially as a human resource person often you're in the middle trying to, again, support the business and the humans. An example: in the early days of the U.S. and India coming together, we needed to do a lot of change management and communication to figure out how can we work together to serve our clients. And I go back to, again, very prescriptive choices we had training U.S. and India as colleagues, India and U.S. as colleagues, we take the training on each side, come together and talk about it. And then again, those relationships and the time together and learning about each other's friends, families, pets, hobbies – all of those sorts of things helped us to figure out how to work together. But I would say thoughtfulness, thoughtfulness in the change management and the communication and the time that you spend together, are really important. So that's one example of an organizational transformation that we've gone through here. But I found those to be probably the most challenging times.

Stacie Berdan:

Mm hmm. Wow, wow. Let's talk about some international, some global aspects of the job, or careers in general. What piece of advice would you give someone looking to start an international career or pursue an international career at Deloitte or some other big consulting firm?



Casey Carlson:

I would give two pieces of advice. One is to do the role – if it's not yet a global role – to do the role that you're in really well. Whether there are formal Global Mobility programs or informal opportunities, those will often come to your highest performers. And the first question that is always asked of your current boss/manager/leader is how are they performing? What did they do? What are their skills? It's always asked of your current leader. So do your job that you're doing really well. I think the second piece is to understand the organization that you're working for. An organization like Deloitte may have, and we do have, a very formal Global Mobility Program where people will take short-term, longer-term expat assignments, there's different ways to do that. You may go on an assignment that is fully funded by the firm, or you may do something where you change roles and change countries and become an employee of that other country. So, just understanding the size and scope of the organization that you work for, and knowing that you may have to take a leap of faith, take on some risk to change roles to move forward. So, I think that that's important in your consideration – the organization you work for and the structures around it. And then I think, when we talk about women and international careers, it's important to remember that, hopefully, day over day, or gender matters less. But I think there are two things to consider. One is ensuring that people aren't making decisions on your behalf. There's lots of opportunities, and there's lots of discussions that happen without you. So ensuring that your manager or leader understands what you're interested in, and what you think you'd like to do next, and sort of knows your current business proposition... And then, keeping your eyes wide open when you do travel or live abroad, because there are differences by gender, and that depends on the country and the location, and each and every day they experience. So I think there are some considerations from a gender perspective. So I'd just add that part.

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, no, that's great. Anything in particular related to India?

Casey Carlson:

India has evolved so much. I would say, I probably had lesser expectations than I should have. I thought there were more gender differences in India when I first went – gosh, now again, over a decade ago, maybe 15 years ago – and inside of our office, Deloitte was Deloitte. And so, I think that was important to learn. That said, I have definitely watched the country and business organizations respect women leaders more. And I think that's been by concerted focus on women and men as colleagues training around that. And now you're starting to see the same in other areas of diversity.

Stacie Berdan:

That's wonderful to hear. That's great. And, and we're all on this continuum of progress. And it is surprising when you go to different places in the world, how stereotypes or past thoughts, or thoughts of the past, really are surprising. They're not the same anymore. So it's really important to keep your eyes wide open, as you said earlier, and really embrace what you see. And ask local people, right, ask your local colleagues what things are, what they're about, how they are, how they're happening, evolving in those kinds of places, that you may consider working. Yeah, cool. You were so thoughtful, and you've had a great career, and you still have a great career at Deloitte. Is there anything that you wish you would like to go back and tell your younger self?

Casey Carlson:

I think I would tell my younger self, and I do say this to every new person that joins the firm, keep learning. Generally speaking, I don't think people have time to read all their emails, to look at the company's intranet each day and see the news there, to see the news outside of our organizations that matter to our industry or the subject that you're focused on. And then, to find time to meet with people and ask questions. And so, I fundamentally believe that if you – whether it's own your career or you choose to continuously learn, whatever that phrase is – for you to make time, to read those emails, to ask those questions, to listen to the answer, to find that next person to



Speak with, and just continue to learn throughout your career. It's really easy to get pulled into being busy (and that's important, and you need to do your job well), but you have to keep learning so that you can figure out what the next step should be.

Stacie Berdan:

Oh, that's wonderful advice. Great, great, great advice. We're wrapping up. It's been a wonderful conversation. Casey, I really appreciate your time. Is there anything else you'd like to add? Maybe something that... address a question maybe that I did not ask you, to share with our listeners?

Casey Carlson:

The only thing I'd add Stacie is taking advantage of any opportunity to travel – whether that's travel domestically or internationally or live abroad – to really take advantage outside of the work reason that you're there, if you can, to enjoy the time when you're traveling. And to, again, I've talked about my colleagues and how gracious they are in India – I find that everywhere that I go – so, saying thank you, both while you're in the moment and maybe after you've left, it just builds relationships; and then when you go back that next time, it's more than a business trip. So, building some thoughtfulness around your business, travel is important.

Stacie Berdan:

So not only traveling and enjoying and seeing things, getting outside the office, but also, yeah, getting to know the people and being grateful to them for what they've done. That's great advice. So thank you, Casey. This has been wonderful talking with you today. And I really appreciate your taking the time because I know you're a very busy woman.

Casey Carlson:

Thank you for having me.

[Music]

Stacie Berdan:

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