

Leadership Profiles

Insights from Legal & Compliance Thought Leaders



Featuring **Marnie Seif**



*Former Chief People Officer,
Chief Legal Officer &
Corporate Secretary
Analog Devices, Inc.*

*Director and Chair of the
Compensation Committee
Kopin Corporation*

*BarkerGilmore Strategic
Advisor and Leadership
Development Coach*

“A good leader builds a team comprised of strong players who sometimes know more than the leader does.”

What early career experiences most shaped your leadership philosophy and approach to executive decision making?

Over the course of my legal career, I worked in law firms and in companies ranging from small Series B startups all the way to a Fortune 500 tech company. I got to work with many different management teams and build teams of my own. A few things that I have found to be true:

Taking a chance on yourself is usually a good move.

I took several risks in my career for the opportunity to advance my career on my own terms. I worked in a variety of startups, some of which didn't make it, and I learned from every situation, which ensured that I made a more sophisticated decision when going to the next company. Along the way, I learned a lot about business, and I had the good fortune to work for and with a variety of strong leaders, who taught me how to build an effective organization.

The team matters.

This is a key tenet for success. A good leader builds a team comprised of strong players who sometimes know more than the leader does. This means that when building my legal organizations, I wanted folks who were not only subject matter experts but also confident in their own abilities and willing to challenge me if they felt strongly on a topic.

If you're interested in something, you will work hard to be great at what you do.

If you're bored, you won't. Genuine curiosity is a trait that served me well in my career. I always wanted to know the details of the business — everything from technical issues to manufacturing processes to understanding the competition. Because I was interested, I had great conversations with leaders in every area of the business at different levels. They taught me so much, which helped me develop good judgment about acceptable risk in the business, which led to effective legal advice. Having these discussions helped to develop trust between me (and the rest of the legal function) and the other functions. Real candor between colleagues leads to better decision-making.

LEADERSHIP PROFILES: Interview with Marnie Seif

You held both the Chief Legal Officer and Chief People Officer roles at Analog Devices. How did that combination shape the way that you think about leadership and organizational success?

The staff positions (Finance, Legal, HR) are often viewed as less critical than the operating roles of CEO, Head of Engineering, Sales, etc. at most companies. And to a degree, that isn't wrong in organizations where the staff functions do mostly transactional work, such as contract drafting, payroll, hiring, and benefits management.

The good news is that legal leaders are uniquely positioned to break out of that pigeonhole. Lawyers are smart and articulate; we can craft an argument, and (hopefully) we have sound judgment. By expanding one's aperture beyond the legal "dos and don'ts," a lawyer who is forward-looking can become an important strategic partner to the CEO and the management team. Some things I learned managing two different functions:

Keep the customer at the center of decision-making, and you'll usually be on the right track.

Most lawyers think of their business counterparts as their customers, and that's too limited a perspective. Expand the aperture of your thinking and consider the end user of the product or service your company makes. What will make it easier for a customer to buy? When you adopt that approach, you realize that legal complexity is the enemy of business. Sometimes we have to jump through a bunch of legal hoops to bring a product to market, but not always. Simpler and clearer usually wins the day. And in the HR role, I considered every employee my "customer," which meant that it was my job to promote a culture where people were treated fairly, allowed to do their best work, and compensated as if they were valuable, not fungible.

In-house lawyers and HR staff should strive not to annoy everyone else in the company.

Surprisingly or not, most employees don't love compliance training or doing other programmatic activities that take away from their core jobs. Good legal leaders always ask, "How does this program benefit the business?" and then design an offering that does that job in a way that employees will not resent. And consider the business calendar when rolling out a required training program — stay away from forcing extraneous work on people close to the end of a quarter or year-end. Give a heads up to management about a program before you introduce it so that they can be prepared when they hear from their own staff about the extra work. People won't thank you for being un-annoying, but they will call you out for the opposite.

Continued...

"Great results come from smart people pulling in the same direction for a common goal."

~ Marnie Seif

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Talent is everything.

That's the whole rule of leadership. If you foster a trusting and transparent working environment where people are free to engage in a fair-minded exchange of ideas, you will attract the very best talent, and you will get stellar results from your team. Great results come from smart people pulling in the same direction for a common goal. And it's super fun to work in a place like that.

MARNIE SEIF BIOGRAPHY

Marnie Seif is a Strategic Advisor & Executive Coach at BarkerGilmore, an accomplished public company director, former Fortune 500 C-suite executive, and semiconductor industry leader. Drawing on extensive executive leadership experience across legal, human resources, governance, executive compensation, business transformation, and mergers and acquisitions, she advises legal and compliance executives on leadership effectiveness, succession planning, executive assessment, onboarding, and increasing General Counsel impact across the business. Marnie helps leaders strengthen executive presence, navigate organizational complexity, build trusted business partnerships, and lead effectively through growth and change.

Marnie spent more than sixteen years at Analog Devices, Inc., a global Fortune 500 semiconductor company, where she served as Chief People Officer and Chief Legal Officer & Corporate Secretary. In these roles, she partnered closely with the board and executive leadership team on governance, enterprise risk, executive compensation, leadership succession, talent strategy, organizational culture, mergers and acquisitions, post-closing integration efforts, and enterprise transformation. She led human capital initiatives spanning succession planning, leadership development, workforce transformation, and organizational effectiveness while also overseeing legal strategy, corporate governance, and public company responsibilities.

Throughout her tenure at Analog Devices, Marnie negotiated and integrated dozens of public and private acquisitions representing more than \$40 billion in transaction value. She led post-closing integration efforts that helped organizations manage growth, organizational change, and cultural integration. Today, she draws on this broad leadership experience to coach legal and compliance executives, advise organizations on leadership development and succession planning, and facilitate confidential peer discussions that help senior leaders expand their influence, strengthen executive presence, and align legal and compliance functions with business strategy.

Marnie currently serves as a director of Kopin Corporation, where she is Chair of the Compensation Committee and a member of the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee. Through these roles, she helps oversee executive compensation, CEO and leadership succession, board effectiveness, and corporate governance. She has been recognized with the Lifetime Achievement Award from Women, Influence & Power in Law and was named one of the Top 50 Most Powerful Women in Technology by the National Diversity Council.

Marnie earned her A.B. from Brown University and her J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School. She also participated in the inaugural cohort of the Yale School of Management Experienced Leaders Initiative.

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