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Learning — and Growing — As You Go

Interviews and Profiles





Delfina Faraoni Manochi

CORPORATE COUNSEL

METLIFE

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

Delfina Faraoni Manochi is enchanted with the world. She wants to see more of it, and make it better when she can. She was originally drawn to law because of international human rights and she hopes she can make a difference one day. As an abogada for MetLife Argentina, she is concentrating on providing exemplary customer service, pro bono advice to worthy causes, and working toward an international secondment arrangement.

Faraoni Manochi grew up in Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina. Her father is a journalist and her mother is an architect. They both work for private companies, which is something of a statement in the liberal South American country.

In Argentina, once a student matriculates from high school, the next step is to pick a major in the career you choose, whether it's medical, law, or journalism school. Faraoni Manochi wasn't sure if she wanted to study international relations or law, but in the end chose law because she was fascinated by organizations like the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

She enrolled at the Universidad de Buenos Aires in 2007 to become a lawyer. While she was studying law, she also contributed to the community. She was a computer teacher for elderly citizens and helped them use the latest technology. At the same time, she was learning and teaching English.

At law school, she initially thought that she would specialize in family law — particularly the care of minors. She wanted to practice internationally and eventually settled on insurance law.

During her final years of law school, she became a paralegal at the law firm of Perez Alati, Grondona, Benites, Arntsen & Martinez de Hoz (h). It was a great introduction for her. "If you're a paralegal, you're expected not to know every-thing so you can start knowing the processes, the legal words, and the legal procedures," Faraoni Manochi says.

She liked the analytical approach of the law. In law school, she learned to think about the logical foundation of legal principles. She still uses that line of inquiry when she is confounded by a new regulation. Argentina's economic history is full of swings. In the early 20th century, it was one of the richest countries in the world, with one of the highest per capita GDP levels. More recently, it battled severe recessions in the late 20th century. Today, it has the second largest economy in South America (behind Brazil) and has a mature, high-income market.

Argentina's legal market isn't dissimilar from the United States or Europe. There are law firms of all sizes. When Faraoni Manochi was a paralegal, she worked at one of the biggest firms in the country, with over 200 lawyers. Most companies in Argentina have a legal department. Like other countries, it's easier to join a law firm than move directly in-house. Faraoni Manochi was fortunate to join MetLife Argentina immediately after graduating from law school. She prefers the in-house style of work more than the grind of the firm. "Working at a law firm, there are always specific deadlines to meet," she says. "You didn't get the chance to organize your day or your tasks that much because you were always trying to meet the closest deadlines. Going to work as an in-house lawyer, I had to learn how to organize my time and accommodate all the requests we received in order to meet every one of those in time."

The key to in-house work, in Faraoni Manochi's opinion, is the ability to recognize important assignments. Often times, the people who are asking the questions won't present the query as something that could have a major effect on the company's reputation or interest. It's up to the in-house lawyer to realize the risks associated with the question or problem. In contrast, by the time a question is asked of a law firm, it is already a big deal.

The legal department of MetLife Argentina has a large workload. It is critical to have a plan to deal with the volume. The possibility of not providing enough attention or detail increases as the workload increases, she says.

Faraoni Manochi's typical day starts with a crowded commute from her home in the Belgrano neighbourhood to MetLife's office in the Microcentro district of Buenos Aires, a few blocks from the famous Plaza de Mayo. She devotes her mornings to catching up on email and answering questions from the previous day. She works better in the afternoon so she spends that time tackling the more analytical questions. Faraoni Manochi prepares daily or near-daily reports for the MetLife's head of legal in Argentina. A typical day usually includes a call with the home office in the United States as well.

Her international obligations aren't over with the US call though. Faraoni Manochi also has a daily or every other day call with Uruguay, Argentina's much smaller neighbor, which is across the Rio de la Plata. The markets of Uruguay and Argentina are similar — the same type of people and customs — but Uruguay only has a population of 3.3 million, which is slightly more than the city of Buenos Aires. As a company, there isn't much room to grow in Uruguay, leading a market to mature quickly.

Faraoni Manochi is in her element when she's negotiating large contracts. She likes to focus on what the other party will offer and enjoys the unpredictability of negotiations. The consensus building is one of her favorite parts of her work. Her other love is pro bono work. Faraoni Manochi has worked with the local branch of the United Way, which works with infants and adolescents. She has provided anti-money laundering advice and other corporate governance to the group.

A separate program she's involved in is called "Investing Is Worth It." Students from all over Buenos Aires come to MetLife's offices to talk with professionals about career goals. Faraoni Manochi explains what the legal department does and what they should look for in a job interview.

She is also taking her own career steps. "A year from now I would like to have a job experience abroad, maybe in the United States or Europe," she says. For now though, she is happy with her team and is concentrating on getting the best results possible.

Getting to Know... Delfina Faraoni Manochi

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE HOBBY?

I'm more of an indoor person. I would say reading and watching movies.

WHAT ARE YOU READING RIGHT NOW?

Actually, an English book by John Steinbeck called *The Moon is Down*. It's really interesting.

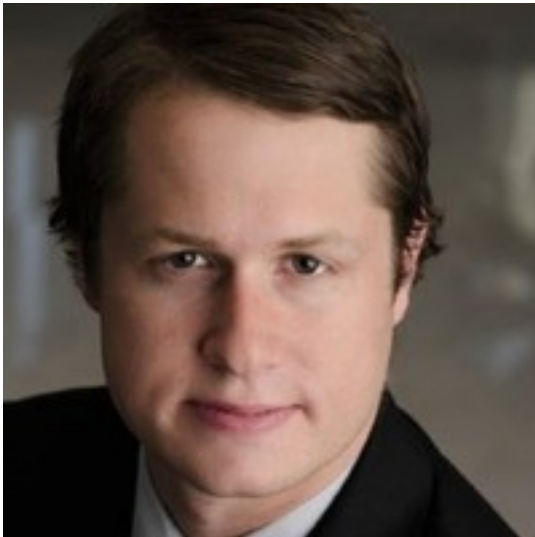
WHAT'S YOUR COMMUTE LIKE?

It's awful. I hate it. We don't have good public transport system here in Buenos Aires. It's really bad. I take a subway from my house to work. Actually, I complain, but many people have it a lot worse than I do. For example my boyfriend has to take a bus, a subway, and another bus to get to work. I complain, but I shouldn't. But here, the subway system is not very good.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE FOOD?

That's a hard one. I would have to say asado, which is like an Argentinian variety of BBQ. It's basically meat on a grill, but not the same type of grill as is used in the States. Well, the meat cuts are different and the amount of time that it's cooked for, so it's very different...

[Joshua H. Shields](#)



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