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2022 ACC Top 10 30-Something: Megan M. Lutes

Interviews and Profiles



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TOP 10
30-
somethings
2022



Megan M. Lutes
GC & CHRO
Glowforge, Inc.
USA

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Standing up for what a company believes in is what led the [Glowforge, Inc.](#) executive team and General Counsel [Megan M. Lutes](#) to launch Flight to Safety, which guarantees travel or relocation to

Glowforge employees in any state that does not provide the healthcare they promised to their employees.

“Whether that is gender-affirming healthcare or abortion or other types of care, if their state is preventing that, we will fly them to where they can get that kind of care,” says Megan. She noted that after doing all the work of checking the legal and insurance issues, Glowforge offered other companies the information, and 31 other companies have contacted them about their policy.

“This is a decision about for what a company will publicly stand,” says Megan, noting the moment is similar to when the United States was confronted with the death of George Floyd and companies had to decide what they stood for. She warns that if a company releases a statement on a volatile issue, “some job candidates might not want to work for you, or some employees may not stand by that.”

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- Megan M. Lutes

“We are prepared if anybody wants to talk about our policy — it’s something we believe in because we promised our employees a certain level of healthcare, and we believe in taking care of our people. And if they live where they can’t get what we promised them, we will support them in a different way. We vetted our policy and feel that we are in a solid place from a legal perspective. And from a policy perspective, this is who we are.”

Megan joined Glowforge, a tech startup that sells 3D printers with laser technology, because she felt genuinely aligned with every leader on the executive team that she met with at Glowforge during her interview. The mission, how people were treated, and the company values impressed her, so she agreed to work with the executive team to help take the company into its next phase.

Glowforge is a company that values the legal department, says Megan. “For me, there are three ways companies approach in-house legal. First, they see legal as the necessary evil — it’s the place where dreams go to die, but we have to have them. Second, legal is an operational unit — they are there to do a certain job, and there is a limited list of things legal will handle. Third, legal is a strategic business partner, and I will never again work for a company that doesn’t view legal that way.”

“I am asked not just what my legal opinion is, I am there as a partner,” shares Megan. The CEO partners with her on any topic. “I think legal executives are underutilized. They have the unique situation of being able to see across the company so they can add so much value if they are business savvy. The CEO can lean on them as someone who is objective,” she says. Shortly after joining Glowforge to build out its legal function, Megan also took over the HR team, recruiting function, facilities function, and Customer Support team.

When asked what her greatest challenge was when she started at Glowforge, Megan says that with a startup “you only have a finite amount of money and headcount and a ton to do. So when you are the first one, you are trying to do the work and at the same time build the team and trying to implement strategy and policy, and that is a perpetual challenge. You can’t overcome it as much as trudge through it.”

“You have to triage the day and decide what is high risk and high value while trying to get a team in

place to take those things off your plate so you can focus on strategy. The key is hiring the right team and not cutting corners on that. As we grow and change as a company, the challenges are different every week.”

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“My career is a result of all of my interests coinciding,” she says. Megan’s legal career started at a law firm where she focused on employment law, and she quickly moved from the law firm to in-house. “I found I really enjoyed policy work, practical solutions, collaborative work, and marrying the law and business solutions.”

Megan’s first in-house job was at a large Fortune 500 international public company. Then she kept going smaller and smaller and moved to a national financial company, then to a tech startup that grew very quickly, and then to another tech startup to be the general counsel.

While Megan was working at different startups, she started speaking and being on panels for diversity and inclusion (D&I), which led her to founding [Diversity University](#), a company that helps organizations implement their diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. “It landed at the right time as companies were desperate for practical, measurable, and actionable solutions to help move their D&I initiatives forward. I started working with all sorts of companies and that business just took off,” Megan comments.

She also serves on the executive board of [Centerforce](#), a third-party advisory board whose members are from various in-house legal departments that come together to promote D&I in the legal community through education and speaking opportunities. And she sits on the board for [Providence’s Pediatric Hospice](#). Megan recently was awarded the [2022 Championing Diversity in Tech award at the Leaders in Tech summit](#) in New York and was featured in Marquis’ “Who’s Who in America.”

Megan has had the opportunity to work on many exciting projects at Glowforge: for example, Glowforge announced a recently launched partnership with [Exploding Kittens](#) for [non-fungible tokens \(NFT\)](#). “It was an exciting time for legal because we were learning a new space,” she says.

Meanwhile, she’s managed to fit in another project, the publication of her book, [Art of Networking: How Anyone Can Build a Robust Network](#).

On the infamous question of how to achieve a work-life balance, Megan says, “I don’t think there is a work-life balance, I think there are tradeoffs. You have to be intentional about what you are going to do. And the tradeoffs you are willing to make will change over time. You have to embrace your tradeoffs. No one can do everything. Try to prioritize what seems to be the most important things.”

Q&A with Megan M. Lutes

Why did you want to be a lawyer?

Not one specific thing, but I knew in college that I wanted to go to grad school. I had applied to a PhD program in psychology as well as law school. I felt a law degree was really versatile and that you can do a lot with it because anything in the world has a legal aspect to it. It can be art or science or any other topic, a law degree gives you a career path to do anything you want to do.

What is your favorite advice to give to mentees?

A great mentor told me once, don't count yourself out of an opportunity because of a challenge that has yet to become a reality – don't count yourself out over something that may not happen. So many people say "it's not a good time" to take that next step, volunteer for that board, speak at that event, apply to that new job because of the unknown. What if my priorities change, what if I can't handle it, if I just wait until I accomplish X, maybe I am not prepared, etc.

Evaluate opportunities based on the present moment — if the job is an incredible opportunity, then apply for it – don't count yourself out based on a worry that may not happen. If and when your concern becomes a reality – deal with [it](#) then. Seize opportunities, or else someone else will.

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