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2020 Top 10 30-Something: Meyling Ly-Ortiz

Interviews and Profiles





MANAGING COUNSEL

EMPLOYMENT & LABOR

TOYOTA MOTOR NORTH AMERICA, INC.

PLANO, TX, USA

AGE: 39

Whether at work or volunteering, Meyling Ly-Ortiz enjoys “being a small part of something bigger” than herself. She connected with Toyota Motor North America’s mission, explaining, “It’s not about just cars or transportation, it’s about mobility. It’s getting someone from point A to point B, literally, but it’s also helping people be upwardly mobile. When people have the joy and freedom to move, anything is possible. Through technology, we can help people get where they want to be.”

Respect for people is at the core of Toyota North America’s company values — and Meyling’s personal ones. As managing counsel of employment and labor, she dedicates her time to finding ways the company can better meet the needs of its employees and customers. Outside of the office, she is involved in several volunteer and community organizations.

One of Meyling’s first initiatives was designing a robust non-harassment program that went beyond “check the box” and “we do this because we have to.” The program incorporates online and in-person trainings and policies (scrubbed of “legalese”) with new formats like FAQs about the investigation process, an internal website with resources for supervisors, and videos. The two-minute

videos add a personal touch, with testimonials from team members at all levels of the company. Topics include “What Respect Means to Me,” “What Happens When I Report,” and “Thank You for Reporting.”

Meyling also led the company’s efforts to make its websites more accessible to customers with disabilities. She worked with stakeholders across the organization to identify, assess, and update Toyota’s US websites for accessibility, in alignment with industry standards such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0. Because new information is added to the websites constantly, the process is never-ending. Meyling knows this time and effort will not only help protect Toyota North America from potential lawsuits, but also help it stay true to its mission and “North Star” of respect for people. She argues, “It isn’t just about that single piece of litigation. It isn’t about that single line of risk. Yes, we have to look at risk, but more importantly, we look at it through the lens of — is this the right thing to do? Is this in line with our core values and our vision as a mobility company?”

Focusing on holistic issues — like the company’s brand — is one of the things Meyling loves about being in-house. She also relishes the chance to spend time with her two toddlers and thinks about how influential her own childhood was to her choice of career. “When you are a child of immigrants and they don’t know the English language as well, you kind of grow up advocating and speaking on behalf of others,” she says. In her case, she even translated contracts for her parents, who owned and operated a donut shop and later a gas station.

Meyling continues to be an advocate in many ways. As co-chair-elect of the Dallas Bar Association’s Equal Access to Justice campaign and social media chair for the Orchid Giving Circle, she raises funds for individuals and organizations in need. She teaches high schoolers about employment law through the ACC Dallas-Fort Worth Chapter’s Street Law Program; coaches law students in moot court at the Southern Methodist University’s School of Law; and mentors young lawyers with the Dallas Asian American Bar Association, the Dallas Association of Young Lawyers, and the Dallas Women Lawyers Association.

By centering people in her professional and personal work, Meyling brings meaningful change to every initiative she undertakes.

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