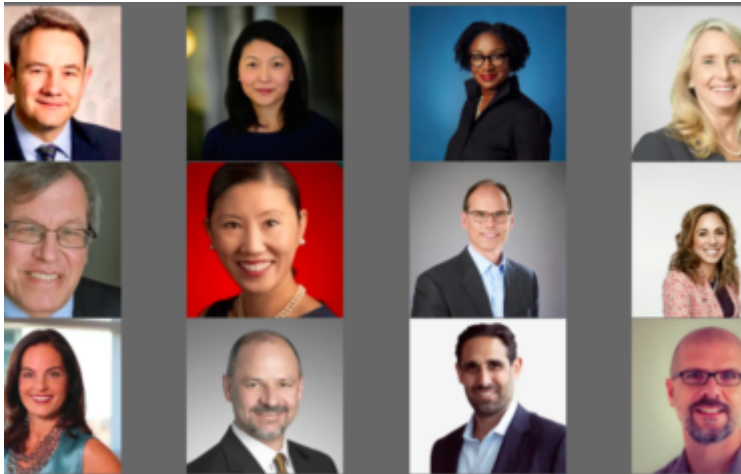


UPFRONT & PERSONAL: A Discussion with Phuong Phillips, CLO of Zynga

Rose D. Ors May 6, 2019

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*We continue our monthly feature, "Upfront & Personal", a column created by **Rose Ors** that brings "the person behind the title" to the forefront in interviews with some of the most influential members of the legal community.*

Phuong Phillips, Chief Legal Officer of online game developer Zynga, recently spoke with Ms. Ors, the CEO and Founder of ClientSmart, about her parents' courage, mentors who look like her, and her desire to move the needle on inclusion in the tech industry.

Rose Ors: *What life moments have defined you?*

Phuong Phillips: My parents' decision to flee Communist Vietnam with three small children in tow.

We left by cover of night on a fishing boat overflowing with fellow refugees. We were at sea for several days before being rescued. After a brief stay in Hong Kong, we left for the Philippines and lived in a refugee camp until a family in the United States agreed to sponsor us.

My parents' courage and sacrifice have instilled in me a lifetime of gratitude and respect for them not just as parents, but as human beings. I live my life in a manner to honor them. I was raised with a deep respect for both our Chinese culture, and we melded it with our new-found Americanism.

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Rose Ors: *What career advice would you give your 20-year-old self today?*

Phuong Phillips: I would tell my ambitious 12-year-old self that being the next Connie Chung is a worthy goal, but it shouldn't be the only one: Be Phuong Young.

However, wanting to be the woman who looked like me on TV helped me achieve a set of career goals I didn't know I had. I graduated from UCLA with a degree in communication studies with an emphasis on business administration. I had no idea law was even a career option until I worked as a corporate paralegal.

Rose Ors: *When did you pivot to a career in the law?*

Phuong Phillips: It was pure luck. After reconsidering journalism, a friend suggested I interview for an open paralegal position at Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati. I got the job and fell in love with the entrepreneurial spirit of the firm and its clients. It was a heady time in Silicon Valley, and I had the great fortune to work on projects for Netflix and other start-ups who have since become industry titans.



Phuong Phillips, CLO of Zynga

I so loved the work I did at Wilson Sonsini, that I decided to pursue a JD degree, which I did at UCLA and returned to the firm where I practiced corporate law for more than seven years.

Rose Ors: *What is an issue that you are passionate about?*

Phuong Phillips: I'm passionate about helping move the dial on diversity and inclusion.

In my job interview with **Frank Gibeau**, Zynga's CEO, I was asked about the kind of impact I want to have at the company. I answered, without hesitation, that I want to bring more women and people of color to its ranks, especially given more than 50% of Zynga's gamers are women.

Rose Ors: *What was Gibeau's response?*

Phuong Phillips: We were on the same page, and he offered me the job. I accepted based on our shared commitment to have Zynga more closely reflect our player base. Since I joined, our 18-person legal department has evolved to include 15 women of African-American, Asian, Latin and Middle Eastern descent.

Rose Ors: *How else does Zynga support diversity and inclusion?*

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For Zynga’s female employees, WAZ offers professional development and community building training, including a 16-week executive coaching program for women who are just at the cusp of their careers — about 10 to 15 women per year. The group also offers other skills development workshops, a speaker series, social events, and celebrations marking women’s success. WAZ is one of the ways where the company supports the representation and career trajectory of women in the tech industry.

Rose Ors: *If anything was possible, how would you spend the last year of your life?*

Phuong Phillips: I would love to travel the world with my husband and our two daughters. We took the girls to Europe last year and watching their expressions and hearing the delight in their voices as they asked questions and wanted to learn about European culture was incredibly meaningful.

My parents did not have the means to give us trips like that, but thanks to their sacrifice all those years ago, I was able to bring my own children on this experience. I would love to expand their cultural horizon even more, so a year of travel would be fantastic.

Rose Ors: *What advice would you give a newly appointed General Counsel?*

Phuong Phillips: That your role is not limited to that of a trusted legal advisor. The position now requires you to be a business partner to the board of directors and the C-suite. Being an excellent lawyer — that is table stakes.

Today, the role also requires you to excel at helping the company you serve achieve its business objectives. When I interviewed with Frank (Gibeau), as well as other members of the company’s board of directors, each noted that the legal department had earned a reputation as the department of “no” — a reputation they wanted changed. And it has. Now, our legal department serves as a funnel to getting business done at Zynga with the greatest positive business impact and the least risk possible.

It is this combination that helps create and protect the company’s value and our value to the company.

This interview has been edited and condensed by Rose Ors.

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forward in a meaningful way.

Rose brings to her new calling more than 25 years of building relationships in the legal industry and providing creative approaches to the business of law. She brings her experience as a successful serial entrepreneur inside and outside the world of law. She brings her unbridled enthusiasm and commitment to writing stories that inform, influence, and inspire.

Rose received her JD from the University of California (BerkeleyLaw), where she was on the Law Review and Moot Court Board. She also received her BA in Rhetoric from the University of California, Berkeley. Go Bears!

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