

APRIL 5, 2024



Howard Fields & Joellen Valentine

Greetings, Wiggins Alumni!

We are pleased to bring you this Alumni Spotlight on Howard Fields and Joellen Valentine, two of our alumni who happened to land in-house at Mastercard.

Joellen is the Senior Vice President and Counsel of the Business Conduct Office at Mastercard and a first-generation attorney with a desire to solve complex problems. She was a litigation associate with Wiggins and Dana from 2003 - 2006.

Howard is the Executive Vice President and Chief Compliance Officer at Mastercard. He was a litigation associate with Wiggins and Dana from 2002 - 2004. His journey to becoming an attorney is intertwined with familial influences, personal passion, and a sense of fulfillment.

We caught up with Howard and Joellen recently to ask about their careers, experience at Wiggins, and advice for young lawyers. Let's dive in.

Howard and Joellen, thanks for taking the time to chat with us today. As you look back on your time at Wiggins, who were your mentors and how did the firm prepare you for your role at Mastercard?

HOWARD: During my time at Wiggins and Dana, I was fortunate to have encountered remarkable mentors who significantly shaped my journey as an attorney. Among them, David Fein and Gates Garrity-Rokous stood out for their profound impact on my professional development. Their teachings, coupled with the firm's supportive culture, prepared me to navigate the complexities of the legal profession and assume my role at Mastercard with confidence and integrity. Working closely with them, I gleaned invaluable lessons that continue to resonate with me today. My tenure at the firm reaffirmed the notion that legal professionals are not merely defenders of the law but champions of integrity and equity, tirelessly advocating for those in need of assistance.

JOELLEN: My advice for those reading this is to be open to receiving advice from a diverse group of people; mentors can come from unexpected places. Of course, it is important to exercise discernment to filter out those pieces of advice that may be less effective for your goals, but overall, I think we should all be trying to pick up as much information as possible from those with valuable lived experiences who are willing to share their insights from the roads they've traveled.

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A WORD OF ADVICE
FROM HOWARD AND JOELLEN

As you progress in your career, continue to be open-minded. Don't get so stuck in your current subject matter or practice area that you close yourself off from other opportunities where you can really thrive. Of course, focus on what is in front of you, but also don't be so rigid with your plan ... life isn't linear; embrace this.

Both of you were in private practice for a short period before moving in-house, what advice did you get before making such a move and what advice do you have for young lawyers who are considering moving in-house?

JOELLEN: Before deciding whether to move from private practice to in-house, conduct a self-assessment to make sure it is the right time to make the move. Companies want in-house lawyers who can provide competent, concise advice with a strong understanding of the business goals. The in-house lawyer needs to always look to add value to the organization. These opportunities may include taking on an additional legal niche to fill a resource gap; building processes for routine matters such as creating templates, policies, or procedural manuals; making presentations to company employees; participating in training or educational initiatives on legal issues of which all should be aware; or assuming nonlegal-related assignments on top of your legal duties.

Successful in-house lawyers can navigate the divide between the legal department and the business side through their communication skills, mainly by avoiding speaking and writing in legalese.

You both are shining examples of life not being linear, meaning that one's progression in life may not always be in a predictable straight line. How important is it to make room for a diverse set of experiences and what is the activity or position that added the most value to you in your profession, and why?

HOWARD: Embracing the non-linear nature of life and making room for diversity in experiences has been paramount in my journey, both personally and professionally. I firmly believe that diversity of thought, culture, and experience is essential for fostering growth and innovation. This principle has not only guided my approach to building teams at Mastercard but has also been instrumental in shaping my own career trajectory. Despite initial expectations of pursuing a career as a federal prosecutor, I remained receptive to exploring various avenues along the way. This openness led me to engage in discussions with others and consider alternative roles that ultimately paved the way to where I am today. Had I not been willing to embrace these diverse opportunities and engage in meaningful dialogue with peers and mentors, I would not have arrived at my current position.

JOELLEN: Yes, the path to achieving success is not a one-size-fits-all journey and I think that a major part of my success lies in my being open-minded and willing to jump on career-forward opportunities as they come. Before joining Mastercard, I was the Head of Litigation at ORIX Corporation USA, a subsidiary of a publicly traded Japanese financial services company, where my responsibilities included oversight of the ethics hotline. For nearly 14 years before ORIX, I was an Associate General Counsel at

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Citigroup Global Markets Inc., managing significant litigation and related regulatory matters arising out of the institutional businesses, and conducting investigations into alleged misconduct. Currently, I run the Business Conduct Office at Mastercard as a Senior Vice President and Counsel. In this role, I manage a team that develops and promotes the policies and trainings grounding the enterprise’s ethical culture, including the Code of Conduct, Whistleblower Policy, Non-Retaliation Policy, and the Conflicts of Interest Guidelines.

I don’t think that the path I traversed to be where I am today was evident, but what is clear when I think back to the road traveled is that I committed every step of the way to do my best and show up with the best version of me in every role I had the privilege of serving in.

Howard, you were a police officer for ten years and were still serving while going to law school. I am assuming there is a grit that developed from serving the community that must have translated into your focus and performance in law school. Tell me about the shift from officer to lawyer. What advice would you have for someone curious about a career shift, whether early or late in their career path?

HOWARD: The transition from serving as a police officer for a decade to embarking on a career as a lawyer was undoubtedly a significant shift, one that brought with it its own set of challenges and rewards. My journey, rooted in the grit instilled in me by my parents and a deep-seated commitment to excellence, was characterized by a profound sense of purpose and passion for the law. The habits of discipline and perseverance ingrained during my years of service translated seamlessly into the rigorous demands of legal education. Moreover, my time in law enforcement instilled in me a deep appreciation for the complexities of the legal system and a firsthand understanding of the impact of law on individuals and communities.

Navigating a career shift, whether early or late in one’s professional journey, is not without its uncertainties and apprehensions. For those contemplating a career shift, I offer this advice: follow your passions with courage and conviction. Life is too short to be spent in pursuit of anything less than genuine happiness and fulfillment. Embrace the unknown with open arms, but do so with a clear understanding of the challenges, risks and opportunities that lie ahead.

Howard, you’ve also been active in the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion space. As an Association of Certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialists (ACAMS) member, founding member of the Connecticut Chapter, and co-host of the organization’s Global Voices interview series, what advice would you give to someone looking to bring more focus to DEI initiatives within their organization?

HOWARD: Promoting DEI within organizations is not just a moral imperative; it’s also essential for fostering growth and innovation. Diversity in all its forms – whether it be of

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thought, culture, gender, or race – brings unique perspectives and insights that drive success in today’s global marketplace. Drawing from my experiences in advocating for DEI initiatives within ACAMS and other platforms, I offer the following advice to those seeking to bring more focus to these efforts within their organizations:

- **Believe in the Cause:** First and foremost, it’s crucial to genuinely believe in the importance of DEI initiatives. Authenticity and conviction are key drivers of meaningful change.
- **Find Your Passion:** Engaging in DEI initiatives should bring a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. Take the time to reflect on what aspects of DEI resonate with you personally and professionally.
- **Educate Yourself and Others:** DEI work requires ongoing education and awareness-building. Invest time in understanding the complexities of diversity issues and the barriers that marginalized communities face.
- **Lead by Example:** Be a champion for diversity and inclusion in your everyday interactions and decision-making processes. Lead by example by actively seeking out diverse perspectives, amplifying underrepresented voices, and challenging biases and stereotypes.
- **Collaborate and Listen:** DEI efforts are most effective when they involve collaboration and dialogue among diverse stakeholders. Take the time to listen to the experiences and perspectives of others, especially those from marginalized communities.
- **Be Resilient and Persistent:** Change takes time and perseverance. Don’t be discouraged by setbacks or challenges along the way. Stay committed to your vision of creating a more inclusive and equitable workplace and continue to advocate for meaningful change.

Promoting diversity, equity and inclusion requires both passion and purpose. By approaching DEI initiatives with sincerity, authenticity, and a commitment to meaningful impact, individuals can drive positive change within their organizations and communities.

Joellen, as a two-time recipient of the New York State Courts Access to Justice volunteer award for dedication to pro bono service, it is obvious that pro bono work is important to you. What advice can you give to young lawyers to make time for pro bono work?

JOELLEN: Pro bono work facilitates professional relationships and networks, especially with other lawyers who are working for legal aid foundations. It could also provide a young lawyer with an invaluable opportunity to get access to interesting assignments that they can truly take ownership of early on in their career.

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My notable pro bono experience while at Wiggin was assisting in securing political asylum for a Tibetan nationalist fleeing persecution from Chinese authorities. Under the supervision of former Partner Scott Greathead, I successfully represented a Tibetan refugee in 2004 at the request of the non-profit organization Human Rights First which is an advocacy group whose mission includes the protection of refugees in search of safe havens. I am very appreciative to Wiggin for facilitating this opportunity as it has left an indelible mark on me.

Howard and Joellen, thank you for your time today. Before we depart, what advice can you share for how to excel in the legal profession while balancing a family life?

JOELLEN: Decide on your non-negotiables and stick to them. For me, I make sure I use my vacation time and do my best not to miss any “big” kid events or activities. My career is important to me, but it is also important that I succeed in my relationship with my family. This led me to find the courage to ask for certain things I needed to make the duality of my life’s priorities sustainable. I asked for a hybrid work arrangement many years before COVID made working from home a normal thing and I am so glad I did because my growing family needed the flexibility. It is important to note that what your personal and professional lives demand from you will not be static; it will constantly be changing and there will be seasons where there may be an imbalance, so communicate with stakeholders clearly and promptly to manage expectations (both professionally and personally).

HOWARD: Success takes sacrifice, and this is true for both your professional and personal life. I try to succeed in both realms by establishing certain boundaries and honoring those commitments. For instance, I made a promise to my family to always be home for dinner; that is important to me to keep. This does not mean there aren’t many times when after dinner I need to return to work, but I am present and active in whatever is in front of me to try and ensure that the time I have scheduled is quality time. The “balance” one may seek in navigating their personal and professional life comes down to making a personal decision; my practical advice is just to make sure that whatever that decision is to you it is one you can live with.

Thank you to Howard and Joellen for participating in this Alumni Spotlight. If you would like to suggest a Wiggin and Dana alum for a future Alumni Spotlight, please submit your suggestion [here](#).