

Michele Miller Hayes Video Bio

I think I decided to become a lawyer when I was in about the second grade, and that was triggered by my parents frequently telling me, “I think you're going to be a lawyer when you grow up.” Because apparently, as a seven-year-old, I like to argue a lot. Who knew? That thought stuck with me for all my educational years. I went to college, got a psychology degree. Sophomore year of college, I added a business administration minor because I like both psychology and business and that seemed like a good combination, then I went to law school. And that was always the thought, that I would go from college to law school. I did it right through – college, followed by law school, and got my degree. I think as to the why I continued to think that was a good idea from second grade on is I really do like to argue. And when I say I like to argue, in a legal sense, that's not a negative term. Arguing in a legal sense is advocating for a position. So when you advocate for a position, as a lawyer, it's not always a position you personally agree with. It's something that you just have to find the position that your client wants, that is legally ethical, and argue for that position. And I really enjoy that challenge, especially when it's something you don't agree with. It's much more challenging and more interesting to do that. And then I've also added Chief Operating Officer to my general counsel role. I'm now Chief Operating Officer and General Counsel, so that has added new and unique challenges. I work with the marketing and events planning teams, facilities, human resources, and IT now. So those are new and different opportunities for growth and to help SVA succeed.

I think one of the things I bring to my role as general counsel, that is perhaps unique, is pragmatism. Much of my job is to manage risk and protect the SVA companies from any high-risk situations. So I do that, but I need to do that in a way that is good for the clients and good for the companies as well. One good example of that is my work with SVA Consulting. SVA Consulting has a lot of life sciences clients, and a lot of those clients are startup companies. So they typically don't have a large legal budget and they don't have internal counsel. So we've developed a process that, I think, works really well where we send them our standard master services agreement and they give me feedback on that. That feedback might be in the form of an email, or a phone call, or a redline document depending on who's looking at it and what their skillset is. So I look at the feedback, try to determine what their pain points are, and try to come up with a solution that is acceptable to both. I try to determine what their intent is and then I go back to them and say, okay, here are the things that I can change because I understand what you're asking for and they're acceptable. And then there might be some that I can't just change in a way they've asked for, or they've been not very specific about what the concern is and I say, here are the alternatives. We've got alternative one and we've got alternative two. I think both would meet your needs and we would be satisfied with them as well. So then, in the vast majority of the cases, that's the resolution to the problem. So the paperwork is complete

and then SVA Consulting and the client can both get to really where they want to be, which is problem-solving and finding solutions for whatever the client hired us for.

I think the favorite thing with my jobs is the problem-solving. Every day I get up in the morning and I think, what's on my agenda for the day. I drive to work, I kind of plan out what needs to be completed that day, I think about what I would like to have completed that day, and usually by the end of the day, the wants don't always get accomplished because something more emergent has come up during the day that requires more immediate attention, but I really like that. I enjoy the challenges of identifying the problem, finding the stakeholders, the people that know, what you know the problem is caused by or where it came from, and finding the solution. It's like finding the puzzle pieces and putting the puzzle together. And that really overlaps both my roles in general counsel and my COO role. Different problems but the same process. You still have to identify, find the people who know what's going on, and find the solution and I find that very engaging.