

8-1-2012

August 2012 E-newsletter Alumni Spotlight: Ashley Watson (J.D.'93)

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Recommended Citation

Communications and Public Relations, Office of, "August 2012 E-newsletter Alumni Spotlight: Ashley Watson (J.D.'93)" (2012).
Profiles of Members of the Law School Community. Paper 22.
<http://digitalcommons.law.uga.edu/profiles/22>

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News @ Georgia Law August 2012 Alumni Profile

Name: Ashley Watson
Title: VP and Chief Ethics & Compliance Officer
Employer Name: Hewlett-Packard Company
Location: Palo Alto, CA
Number of years there: 3.5
Georgia Law graduation year: 1993
Other degree(s)/institution(s): B.A. with honors and distinction in Political Science / University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



1. Why did you choose to attend Georgia Law?

▶ I had the honor of receiving a scholarship to Georgia Law, which made the decision to attend quite easy. I'm from Atlanta and planned to practice law there so Georgia was clearly the best school at the best price. I never expected to end up in California, but my Georgia Law education has served me well at every step of my career

2. Where was your favorite place to study during law school?

▶ I liked to change scenery a lot so I'd spend time at the law library, at home, outside and in classrooms. An empty classroom has almost no distractions.

3. What was your favorite thing about living in Athens?

▶ Athens is a truly great college town, but with the benefit of great restaurants and some of the best live music anywhere. I loved almost everything about it.

4. What advice would you give to current Georgia Law students?

▶ Two things - First, try to get a job in the public sector for some period of time. I clerked for a federal judge right out of law school and it gave me a perspective on the law, and how to be a lawyer, that I could not have gotten any other way. It wasn't just about the best way to present a case, it was about the importance of maintaining integrity and reputation. Whether you work for a judge, a DA or a government agency, you will find it invaluable. Second, take a job at some point that scares you. My career has progressed because I was willing to leave my comfort zone.

5. Please give a brief description of your responsibilities at Hewlett-Packard.

▶ As the Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer, I am responsible for HP's policies and programs to ensure ethical decision making and compliance with laws and regulations globally. Specific areas of ownership include the Standards of Business Conduct policy, counseling, violations and remediation; global anticorruption program; human rights and global citizenship; pan-HP environmental and supply chain sustainability and compliance; global privacy program; records and information management and pan-HP compliance program assessments.

6. What do you enjoy most about your job? What is the most rewarding aspect?

▶ I have a challenging but incredibly interesting job. If I had to pick one favorite aspect, it would probably be the global nature of the work. I've really loved the opportunity to learn about other legal systems and cultures and find ways to develop policies and programs that will work across our business. It's not easy but fun. I also have the opportunity to provide leadership on human rights. HP is a great client when it comes to citizenship, and I really enjoy helping to find ways to make a positive impact on the communities where we operate.

7. What made you decide to go from a traditional law practice to in-house counsel?

▶ I wanted to go in-house so I could really own the problems I was trying to solve. Being an outside lawyer is great, but you are more of an adviser than an owner. I also disliked billing hours.

8. What is one of the greatest challenges facing your field right now?

▶ Globalization is a challenge in ethics and compliance because the rule of law and other standards in many emerging countries are still evolving. Implementing a single set of corporate values across many cultures takes more than publishing a policy.

9. What do you do to handle the stress of your work? How do you relax after a stressful day?

- I try to exercise regularly and bring a sense of humor to the office. I firmly believe that having a serious job does not mean you have to be serious all day.

10. What advice would you give to someone wanting to work in your field?

- Spend time as a prosecutor (although I didn't), especially at the federal level if you can. I would also advise someone to learn more about the work. It's not for everyone. I am often viewed as the police or internal affairs, which means I'm not necessarily the most popular person in the room. But ethics and compliance is interesting and incredibly important.

11. What do you enjoy doing in your free time? What are your hobbies?

- I love playing golf, hiking and running (more jogging these days). Now that I live in California, I also really enjoy wine tasting.

12. When you look out your office window, what do you see?

- Because I live in the perfect microclimate south of San Francisco, about 10 months of the year I see a beautiful clear blue sky. I also see a shuffleboard court, but I have never seen anyone playing.



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