



Aileen Schwartz Forges Relationships, Inspires Change

Aileen Schwartz of Hill International discusses how believing in her people motivates them to move mountains

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By **KC Esper**

A[ileen Schwartz](#) is a go-getter. Early in her career, working in-house was her dream. So, with her first CEO and mentor Stephen Shilling's help, she persevered to become General Counsel for The Quaker Group, a privately held company specializing in real estate development and construction. Though Shilling would pass away just shy of two years after she landed this position, the lessons he taught her have remained with her throughout her career, fueled her passion for the construction industry, and showed her how to make a difference no matter her role.

After serving The Quaker Group for almost seven years, Schwartz realized it was time to grow in her career and applied for a legal position at [Hill International](#), a publicly traded global construction management and project management consulting firm currently headquartered in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Since joining Hill International in 2008, she has been promoted three times, moving up the ladder from her first role as Assistant General Counsel to her current, wide-ranging position as SVP, Senior Corporate Counsel US, and Privacy Officer. Schwartz credits her success at Hill International to working with William H. Dengler, Jr., Hill's former General Counsel and now Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer. "Having a supervisor who trusts your

instincts, provides you with autonomy to perform your duties, and supports your efforts makes all the difference,” says Schwartz.



Aileen Schwartz, SVP, Senior Corporate Counsel US, and Privacy Officer, Hill International

Photo by Joe Dunphy

The scope of Schwartz’s duties includes litigation management, contract and lease review and negotiation, advising on employment law, human resource investigations, implementation and compliance worldwide with privacy laws, and response to—and prevention of—cybersecurity breaches. “It’s different every day,” she says. “I have many diverse duties, so one day is totally dissimilar to the next.” While she loves solving every challenge that lands on her desk, she attests that the best part of her job is building and working with a team of amazing people who support her. In fact, to Schwartz, building

out both her in-house and outside counsel networks with strong, diverse talent is imperative to her success and the performance of her duties.

“By welcoming a diversity of people, you get a huge range of opinions, thoughts, and creativity on how to problem solve and create alternative solutions,” Schwartz explains. “I always look for the best person for the job with the right expertise, regardless of who they are. Having this diverse workforce both internally, at Hill International, and externally, through other in-house contacts and outside counsel, adds value to everything I do and to the entire team.”

In her practice, Schwartz makes a point to welcome talented people of all backgrounds and beliefs. Likewise, she continually develops relationships with every member of her team, allowing them to contact her at any hour with any problem. “It’s a really good feeling knowing my coworkers and outside counsel feel comfortable reaching out. They know I will respond right away, enabling us to solve problems before they happen,” Schwartz says. “Even though we don’t hesitate to contact one another, we respect each other’s outside lives. This balance is key to working together effectively.” In the same way that she serves as a support system for her coworkers and diverse outside counsel, she is a strong advocate for other female attorneys.

When Schwartz graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Law School, more than half her class was female. Years later, however, she realized that very few of her female classmates were still practicing law. “It’s a shame that all these brilliant women are not using their legal education,” she says. Similarly, Schwartz started noticing that women who were practicing in the field weren’t offered the same or equivalent opportunities as their male counterparts. Unjustly, many weren’t promoted because law firms didn’t want to invest in someone who could potentially leave to start a family. The overall lack of female representation and promotion inspired Schwartz to use her experience to become an advocate for female lawyers.

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“We’re going to keep working to change the way people see women in the field,” Schwartz explains. “At Hill International, I can accomplish anything I put my mind to. I have opportunities to advance and am not held back because of my gender in any way at the company. I hope to see this more throughout the legal profession.” Schwartz adds, “I believe my daughter, currently in graduate school, will enjoy a more welcoming and

supporting workplace thanks to the efforts of men and women in leadership roles today at more forward-thinking companies. I am confident that young women today will know a different world coming out of school than I ever did and that they will have a lot more opportunities.”

To accomplish her goal of a more equal legal industry, Schwartz started the Women’s Committee within the Association of Corporate Counsel for the Greater Philadelphia Area Chapter. The committee serves as a hub for women in legal to have open dialogues about their experiences while providing and receiving support from their female cohorts. “These events allow women to discuss the challenges they have experienced and see how others have been confronted with similar situations. It’s been extremely helpful for younger women in the profession.” Schwartz is also an active member of the Forum of Executive Women and Women Owned Law, organizations that likewise promote professional women.

For Schwartz, watching the growth inside and outside of Hill International inspires her to continue her efforts and gives her hope for future generations of attorneys. As she continues to forge relationships and serve as a mentor for her team, she hopes to continue sparking positive change however she can. “I came to Hill right after it went public, so it’s been an incredible opportunity to evolve with the company. There is diversity in our leadership and in our departments, and it’s wonderful to see the ways that the company is thriving thanks, in part, to this approach.”

Cohen Seglias Pallas Greenhall & Furman PC:

“I have known Aileen for over 20 years, and she is one of the best attorneys I have ever worked with. She creates pragmatic, disciplined, and principled solutions with a sense of professionalism and ease.”

—George E. Pallas, Managing Partner