



Season 2, Episode 3 – Compliance / Sustainability

Gail Lehman, Executive VP, General Counsel, & Corporate Secretary, Hexcel Corporation
Stacie Berdan, International Careers Expert (Podcast Host)

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Stacie Berdan:

Welcome to the Global Careers Podcast sponsored by GW-CIBER!

THE source for inspiring stories from seasoned professionals who have embraced a global role and reaped the benefits. We offer practical advice and insider tips across a broad swath of industries and fields around the world. Whether or not you've considered moving abroad or taking on an international role, globalization will impact your career. So join us for a lively discussion as we explore what an international career really means. My name is Stacie Nevadomski Berdan and I'll be your host!

In Season 2 we find ourselves in a fast-changing world still affected by the pandemic where we must adapt to succeed. Come with us as we share with you how to craft your place in the new global workspace.

Today, I have the pleasure of interviewing Gail Lehman, Executive Vice President, General Counsel, and Corporate Secretary for Hexcel Corporation – a global leader in advanced composites technology used in aerospace, defense, and industrial applications. Gail oversees the legal and trade compliance department for this \$1.6bn company with global operations, including nineteen manufacturing locations on six continents. Gail has also held positions in human resources in a number of public and private equity companies. Welcome Gail, it's a pleasure to have you!

Gail Lehman:

Thank you Stacie, it's great to be here.

Stacie Berdan:

Great, so let's get started! One of the objectives of this podcasts is to provide a sense of the careers that are out there. You've had a diverse career with lots of significant global responsibilities. Tell us about it – what you do, and your role today with Hexcel.

Gail Lehman:

Sure. And, as you said, Hexcel is a truly global company. About half of our locations, operations, and sales are in the US, and half outside the US – including Europe, China, Africa. And then sales to a number of countries... My team is also geographically diverse, with team members in a number of locations in the US and Europe. I manage all the legal affairs, government affairs, and trade compliance for Hexcel. The team manages so many different kinds of issues – customer and supplier contracts, we handle local regulations and requirements to keep our manufacturing operations going... And that's something that was very challenging during the pandemic. We coordinate legal matters for buildouts of new sites around the world. Currently we are building an R&T center in Salt Lake City, Utah and a new manufacturing location in Morocco. We are also a company that is growing. So we are always looking at acquiring new businesses or entering into partnerships. And one instance, I've been doing a lot of work recently involving our joint venture in China. I also have a team that handles intellectual property matters on a global basis, deciding where we need to protect our technology and support R&T. And then, finally, we manage a lot of employee issues across all of our locations, whether that's union matters (and almost all the workforce outside the US is typically union for global operations) and then we handle issues like employee complaints, terminations, training, etc. So, it's a different experience almost every day. Which is what makes my role really exciting.



Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, that sounds fabulous. And... That's a very big role that... awful lot of responsibility around the world... So that's amazing. And you've had a long journey to get there obviously. And your teams that you work with – are they all lawyers? So, for students, that are kind of interested in the industry, trade, compliance – is that the training that they need?

Gail Lehman:

No... I have a number of lawyers, and as I said, I have a number of lawyers that are particularly specialized in intellectual property because our technology is so important to Hexcel. I also have people that are really trade specialists. So they are not lawyers, but they have deep experience working with governments about importing and exporting products. And then on our legal side we have other staff, like paralegals and administrative and contract support. So it's a variety of different kinds of roles.

Stacie Berdan:

Great. So, for students interested in this very big and growing industry, not just Hexcel itself, what are the greatest opportunities and challenges that you see, besides the pandemic – today, as well as coming up?

Gail Lehman:

Yeah... And the pandemic was hard on our industry, because about 70% of our business pre-pandemic was commercial aerospace. Primarily selling to Boeing and Airbus and their subs. For us and that industry in general we need travel to come back, especially international travel to be strong. So we are looking at that all the time. But while we manage that impact, we're still looking to drive growth – so we look for acquisition targets and building internal teams that can develop new products, all the while, while we have this reduced staff due to the cost cutting that was needed over the last eighteen months. So that's very challenging. And for me, it's about managing this global staff and getting everyone to pitch in, even in areas that they don't usually handle, you know, to get all this work done. But that also creates new opportunities for my team because they get to work in new areas and take on new challenges... In fact, it's one way I've been able to give people new international experiences – because we need more folks on board, and they can take over a new contract for new products, for instance in France or the UK, and get experience working with different employees there as well. We are facing a lot of challenges, as I said, on the trade front. That's tough, exporting our products from either the US or Europe, particularly into China for aircraft manufacturing. So that is a lot of work on the government relations side – spending time in Washington, trying to think how we can expand that business in China... And then, on the IP side, we do have amazing technology that contributes to light weight in aircraft. And there's a wonderful sustainability story actually... So we have to focus on that technology and the advancement. So my team has to make sure our intellectual property is protected on a global basis. I think those are some of the major issues right now.

Stacie Berdan:

Sounds like some pretty big issues. You mentioned... I hear 'adaptability' coming through... which sounds like something that the team needs to be in... Do you think, specifically, if someone was trying to enter the field right now, a new hire, what would, what would some of these things mean to them and their careers? Should they continue pursuing it, should they think about trade, what is it they should think about?

Gail Lehman:

Well listen... it is adaptability for us. We had to adapt so much to what's happened in the past eighteen months. We needed to be nimble about getting on and learning how to do remote work, and pitching in, as I said... everybody's willing to do work, whether it's a contract or getting involved in an export license. So, I think just broadening skills is always the main thing. How can you get the most experiences – whether you're doing internships – speak up, ask to do more, certainly ask for international experience, I think. I can't tell you how many times, looking at new general council jobs, one of the first questions they would ask me was "What's your international experience? Have you managed people internationally? Did you have customers, contracts that you've done?" Because it really is a



different world! The cultures are so different, the requirements you have to understand... And so, you have to go out, I think, and really look as young folks for those opportunities and put yourself out there as wanting to get involved.

Stacie Berdan:

Great, great... That's a good segway to specific skills... So, if you are talking to the career center, people who actually have not yet (maybe they've had some internships, maybe they haven't)... and they are about to apply to some jobs that are out there, your industry or beyond (because you you've worked a lot, you've seen a lot of different things), what skills are critical for new hires today do you think?

Gail Lehman:

I think you have to be flexible... I mean... gone are the days, probably long gone, where you would work for one company and would be satisfied and plan to stay on one spot for a long time. I think you have to be very flexible and expect your career to go in different directions, and just keep thinking about how you can broaden what you're doing. Again, whether you have... if you want to do international work, you know, can you learn more about cultures, be a student of new cultures... Because it really is, as I said, very different. Just even managing staff that has grown up and is living in a different culture, a different country. So, look for ways to get yourself more comfortable with working in places outside of our country. And again, always step up to ask for those opportunities when you can.

Stacie Berdan:

Great. So, things like study abroad once it comes back...

Gail Lehman:

I would have! I wish I did!

Stacie Berdan:

...learning a new language...yeah, internships... OK, great. So learning that cross-cultural bit, which can be challenging, but they are definitely using internet and different cross-cultural tools can help students... that's great.

Gail Lehman:

Yeah, and you know, nowadays it's even more easy I think to learn another language. And that's something too I wish I had continued with it, and pursued more forcefully when I was younger... Because all of those things make somebody such a broader and richer candidate for a company like ours that's global and where they're looking at well... what different things could we... where could we send you overseas, to do either a project or another role? So, getting all of that is great.

Stacie Berdan:

Good. Good advice, good. Yeah, I'm a huge language advocate, so keep it up everybody who is learning another language. Definitely during this time period it's been, as you said, a little easier to do using some of the tools, so that's great advice. So, some of the workplace trends that have emerged, and you mentioned one of them, sustainability, with some of your products, things have emerged, they've changed the way business works – tell me about some of them. You know, pick one – maybe it's sustainability, maybe it's DEI, maybe it's remote work – what is it that you'd like to talk about and share, how does it affect business today?

Gail Lehman:

Right... Well, we do an awful lot here, with sustainability and diversity and inclusion, for us really it's part of that. It's how do you build a company that is sustainable, that's going to be around for the long term. And I can't tell you how much focus now is on ESG and sustainability. Out investors what to hear about it, our customers expect us to do more and more in that area, the investors, the employees... So, everybody is excited and looking for more and



more disclosure. And for us, again, we have a fantastic story... We are a composite materials substitute for metals – they light weigh aircraft, they reduce fuel consumption; we also do work on noise reduction in engines for aircraft, we make blades for wind turbines... So, we have a lot that's going on. But I think in the past there wasn't as much push to disclose that and figure out how you could use it really to attract and retain employees. People want to hear all about this nowadays. So we put goals together, something exciting for my team to work on, because it's not something they always get to do – you know, they are more working on contracts or just on acquisitions – but this is kind of fun, this is strategic for the company. And, learning how to write the goals, and how to prepare for those goals to influence and to make customers happy about what we are doing. It's going to be a really important business advantage for us, I think, as we do more and more of this.

Stacie Berdan:

Sounds like a very exciting... so, definitely as an attraction for top, you know, talent. But what does this mean for a person applying for a job, to your company or others who have these kinds of goals? What is it that they need to do or show in order to present themselves that they are aligned with this?

Gail Lehman:

Well, when you are going, I think, to interview with a company or are looking at companies you want to work for, understand about their products. And understand what their sustainability options are – how can they either help reduce emissions that they might have in their operations or company like ours what could be something that could be a story to tell to build business advantage. And as they learn that, as they show their interest in the companies, as they show how strategic they want to be when they work there (they are not just going to think about just putting their head down and finish their written work), they want to think about how they can contribute to the future. And I think there are so many opportunities. Again, with things like sustainability we have people in areas of our business like our communications, drafting documents, we have compliance people that are looking at this area, we have sourcing – people that have to go out and look for where we can more sustainably source our raw materials or change out raw materials for green options. So, it's a burgeoning area, it's growing, and frankly I think it's more exciting and fun to work at.

Stacie Berdan:

Oh, it sounds so, yeah. So, what you're saying is: don't just say "yes, diversity is important to me", but say "yeah, that's important to me, not just as checking the box, but because of what it means to the business, what it means that we can create, produce, develop, invent", what have you. And bringing that attitude, kind of, to the interview.

Lehman:

Exactly...think a little bit in advance about how you would say it's an opportunity for the company.

Stacie Berdan:

Absolutely, not just about me and my values, great. Great advice. Because a lot of times, I think, people wonder about that aspect. It's now all about them, it's definitely about who's hiring them. So, that makes me think about manufacturing – global supply chain, manufacturing... You, as an entity, obviously involved in that in your job, and specifically with respect to those nineteen manufacturing sites around the world, can you just talk a little bit about what kind of roles – it doesn't have to be in your company, but just generally speaking – what kind of roles are involved for maybe business students or other interested in a big company when it comes to manufacturing?

Gail Lehman:

Manufacturing is an area that has so much going on. It's not just about the people that might be on the line creating the products, as important as they are... But there are people that have to manage that, there are people that have to look at the costs of manufacturing and make sure they make sense – whether that's how the machinery is running, or the output, or the materials, again, that we're buying for that. So there are financial roles, there are roles in modeling, and developing the right manufacturing processes. So there's so much really that goes into that, beyond



just that people that are manually creating products. And I think the operations are pretty interesting. I have never had more fun than when I go to plants and really watch our products being made, because then I really have an understanding of why I'm working so hard on what I'm doing to get these things manufactured properly, and out the door, and satisfying customers. But there are so many roles, as I say, in the financial management of that, the management of the people that are working on the lines, and, you know, the sourcing of what's needed to get that done.

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, that's great, that's wonderful. It's really interesting path to actually... yeah, financing, productivity, they are all... HR, right, all elements, compliance, all kinds of things...

Gail Lehman:

And quality too...

Stacie Berdan:

Definitely quality...

Gail Lehman:

...which is more and more important I think with the rise of sustainability again... people are looking at quality, how... your attention to that, and ensuring the quality of your products really contributes to what you're doing to make your company sustainable and long-term focused.

Stacie Berdan:

Great, wonderful. Well, thanking about that on a global scale, and all of these issues that we've got, we know that, you know, global is everywhere... whether students, recent grads that not think they want a global career. You've just described wonderfully how it doesn't matter whether you think you want a global career or not, it is going to touch you, it is most likely going to affect your career, and you better be prepared for it. In fact, it affects all of us, our lives, as we've seen recently. What specific advice – you gave some a little bit earlier – but specific advice that you have for listeners as it relates to globalization as they are entering this workforce? Yes – learn a language, understand cross-cultural things... But do you have any specific tips?

Gail Lehman:

Well I think one thing is to make sure people know what you want. That these opportunities are not necessarily going to come to you without work on your part. So if you are in a company or a firm with global operations – make the connections and speak to people in those locations, outside the US perhaps, who are doing projects internationally. And find out if there's an option for you to work on a project, or to maybe take an international assignment for a time. You really have to go out there and promote yourself. And I have some young attorneys for instance that want to get to larger roles within Hexcel, and we're looking for those kinds of opportunities for them – can they go and offer to do a contract for a colleague that's in Europe, that's involving Airbus, for instance in France. You've got to do a little extra work, you've got to push yourself out there a little bit. Make sure people know that it's what you want... Those things aren't just going to come to you by magic. They come to you by you doing some work for it.

Stacie Berdan:

Definitely, great. What would you have... you know, take yourself out maybe 30,000 feet, if you are speaking to someone who says "well, I don't want to do that, I don't want an international career, I just want to work for this company" – what would you say to someone like that? Not just your company, but generally speaking, entering the workforce, any industry...



Gail Lehman:

Well, as you said, it's almost unavoidable these days because companies like ours, we are very committed to the US manufacturing base and we are one of the few companies in our industry that's been building pretty significant manufacturing capability in the US, while we also do it overseas. But still, you've got to... Most companies nowadays have to think about what they are doing internationally. For instance, in China – in trying to break into their commercial aircraft manufacturing, they want to know are we going to support locations, are we going to build jobs over there. So we've had to build global operations and build some manufacturing capability, and some test-lab capability in China – just to prove, I guess, worthy of having the business from customers over there. Companies can hardly avoid becoming global. And I think, if you are in any kind of larger company, you are going to face these kinds of issues. So, good to be prepared for it.

Stacie Berdan:

Good to be prepared, read up, be informed, think about solutions outside the box besides just your own company and country. Great. And every culture is different, yeah. What advice do you wish you had been given at the beginning of your career and why? What lessons can you share with our listeners?

Gail Lehman:

Well I've alluded to it a bit, I think. The importance of going out and letting people know what you want to do. For me it's all about building up your network. And I wish somebody had schooled me in this years ago. It's something that I constantly am driving home with my young attorneys, people that I mentor, and even my own children who are starting out in their career. Your network is all important. And the broader it is, whether it's people you connect on LinkedIn, or people you keep in touch with where you've done your internship, or people you're meeting where you're employed, you have to nurture that network. Because that's where your future opportunities will come from. So, you know, I've told my children – when you've done an internship for instance, keep in touch with the people there, write emails to update them, tell them how you're doing, and when you're back in the area ask if they want to go for a cup of coffee. Find ways for your network to expand too, outside that environment you've got. So, for example join a non-profit board, or work on volunteering at a non-profit. So, not only do you feel good about giving back, but the people you'll meet that might be from other companies or employers – that enhances your network immeasurably. It's one of the things that kind of contacts that will remember your interests if you share them, and them perhaps, if an international assignment might come up some day – they'll refer you or talk to you about it. Your network is your best asset.

Stacie Berdan:

Great advice yeah. Which has been a little tricky for lots of people, all of us actually, over the last eighteen months or so... but doing it through Zoom, following up through email, it doesn't always have to be in person, right, sometimes it can be just connections.

Gail Lehman:

Not at all. And ask people... I've had so many people reach out during this time and say "hey, I haven't talked to you for a while, can we get on Zoom for fifteen minutes", it doesn't have to be a big connection. But you do have to nurture those connections.

Stacie Berdan:

Great, great advice. Network and nurturing it, it's not just about just about the networking, it's about the nurturing – that's a really good distinction. As we wrap up, is there anything else you'd like to add?

Gail Lehman:

Well, you know, I'd say again – advocate for yourself. You don't want to appear arrogant, of course, but you are a sales person, in a sense, for yourself. So I think you can't hesitate to let people know what you've done, what you've



accomplished, and what you're passionate about. Because, again, that's how people might remember and think about you when an amazing opportunity comes along. And if you've worked to support others and have a nurturing, sort of, two-way network, you will actually, I think, be surprised at the things that can come your way.

Stacie Berdan:

That's great advice, wonderful advice. Thank you so much! And, especially for taking the time. I know that you are very busy and you have a lot of 24-7 responsibilities going on which is fascinating and just to take the time with us today – we really appreciate it. Your advice has been truly inspiring, super helpful, and I really appreciate it. So thanks a lot, Gail.

Gail Lehman:

Yeah, it's a pleasure.

Stacie Berdan:

Great, take care.

Gail Lehman:

Bye!

[Music]

Stacie Berdan:

You have been listening to the GW-CIBER Global Careers podcast. Join us again next time, and in the meantime – go global!