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The increasing digitisation of investigations has been a game changer. The pandemic has also been a catalyst for further change within a very short time. Conducting an internal investigation entirely remotely from one's desktop has become the new normal.

The highlight of my career came when Lalive asked me to help them open their Zurich office in 2010. Prior to that, I had worked as an associate at another Zurich law firm and was used to working on cases. Setting up a new office was a completely new experience and a great opportunity to grow into an untapped market. We were only three lawyers in Zurich at that time and have now developed into an office with 29 lawyers. Over the years, we have been able to develop a considerable investigations practice. To name a few examples, we have been the Swiss counsel to the US monitor of a large Swiss company, making us the first foreign monitor based in Switzerland to conduct an in-depth investigation into the company's US-related practices. We have also acted as Swiss counsel to the local subsidiary of a foreign listed company in the first self-reporting to and settlement with the Office of the Attorney General in a case of suspected corporate failure to prevent bribery of foreign officials.

Internal investigations have become a passion over the years. I like the psychological aspects of my work. Almost every investigation starts with a human failure and you need to understand the personal circumstances and motives of offenders and of the other parties involved such as whistleblowers, managers and colleagues. I like analysing facts, and an investigation is like solving a puzzle. You have to put the pieces together to help the client find a sensible solution. You need some creativity and human understanding to be successful in that exercise. Conducting internal investigations gives me the opportunity to interact and converse with people from different backgrounds, which is very fulfilling and instructive. It is exciting to learn about different industries and work practices through investigations. I consider it a great privilege to have new experiences and learn things every day.

My firm has always been extremely supportive and encouraging, particularly when I became a mother. I'm lucky to work in a firm that doesn't just pay lip service to diversity, it's part of our DNA. We stand out on the Swiss market with nearly 30% female partners and strive for parity in the next five to 10 years. Our investigations practice counts many female lawyers, which we see as a selling point.

One of the biggest challenges of my career, but also one of the most rewarding experiences in my life, was when I worked as a foreign attorney in a law firm in Delhi, India, almost two decades ago. I was immersed in a totally different culture and had to adapt to other ways of thinking and working. We had an office cook that prepared delicious Indian dishes for lunch, which we shared all together. There was no better way to build lasting relationships and at the same time satisfy my love for Indian food. This was also the time when I learnt to assert myself in a male-dominated work culture, something that still holds true today. I continue to have strong ties to the continent and benefit from this experience today as I evolve in a constantly moving and globalised world. Other than that, a recurring general challenge when conducting internal investigations is to remain independent and uninfluenced in the collection and assessment of facts. Sometimes clients do not want to hear the truth or impose unrealistic time constraints that prevent a thorough, independent and unbiased investigation of the facts. Careful planning at the outset of an investigation, educating the client on the importance of independence, managing expectations, and being mindful of these challenges may eliminate or significantly reduce threats to the investigator's independence.

Video conferences have become a valuable tool in investigations. They have increased collaboration between teams in different jurisdictions, reduced the stress and cost related to travelling and allowed for more flexibility. This is particularly valuable for women who combine a family with their work. Personally, reducing travel time has allowed me to spend more time with my children while still being as dedicated to my work as before.

We should keep educating clients on the importance of diverse teams in investigations. While certain companies are still satisfied to know that a reputable law firm is handling the matter, there is an increasing awareness that a diverse team can be a differentiating factor in the quality of information that surfaces in the course of the investigation. A diverse team can help reduce unconscious bias, a recurring challenge to the independence of an investigation. To reach the goal of having more women leading investigations, it is important that women support each other. I personally try to refer work to capable women whenever possible.

I once found a solution to a problem in a dream. When I'm immersed in an investigation, the case tends to follow me at night. I've experienced that my subconscious mind has actively worked on problems that I was not yet able to solve consciously in my waking life.

The #MeToo movement, bringing with it changes in corporate culture and increasing accountability for unacceptable behaviour, has triggered a wave of a new type of investigation in the workplace. Against that background, companies are now becoming more and more aware that a successful investigation requires skill, experience and full understanding of the underlying fundamentals, and that this cannot be achieved without a diverse team where the point of view of women investigators is taken seriously.



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