

Beck Barnett

General Counsel – Digital and technology and Privacy Officer at Seven West Media

Beck Barnett is the General Counsel - Digital and Technology, and Privacy Officer at Seven West Media. Beck has responsibility for enabling and supporting the ongoing digital transformation of the business, by providing it with the legal and commercial support it requires to achieve large scale cross platform content distribution, and to attract, grow and maintain its digital audience in a manner which strikes the right balance between data commercialisation and privacy compliance. **Tess Mierendorff**, Senior Associate in Herbert Smith Freehills' IP team, spoke to Beck about her thoughts on International Women's Day, #BreaktheBias, and the excitements and challenges of working in the media law space in 2022.

TESS MIERENDORFF: Thanks Beck for agreeing to talk with us as we celebrate International Women's Day. The 2022 International Women's Day campaign theme is #BreakTheBias. What does this mean to you and do you have any suggestions for how our readers can implement it in their professional and personal lives?

BECK BARNETT: The key to breaking the bias, in my opinion, is for all of us to get more vocal against bias against women. We have all seen the impact being vocal has, via the #MeToo movement and amazing women such as Grace Tame and Brittany Higgins speaking their truth. It takes brave people to speak out, and by speaking out, the uncomfortable gets ventilated, and when the uncomfortable gets ventilated and people start to talk, awareness grows and change starts to happen.

But if we are going to break down stereotypes, discrimination and bias against women in the workplace, we can't leave this to the brave – we all need to play a part, and not only women. And it goes beyond talk – we need to walk the walk; we need action – we need to not walk past the bias we observe, for the standard you walk past is the standard you accept. We need to lead by example – we need to show our colleagues that everyone's opinion matters; we need to show our kids that our girls and our boys are equally capable in all areas of study – that business needs women in technology, that a diverse Board of Directors is a more effective one, that women in all sports are entitled to the same pay as men.

We need to think about our own actions, pull ourselves up where unconscious bias rears its ugly head, observe our own behaviours – if it's not helpful, we need to make change. Paying lip service to the fight for gender equality in the workplace will not get us to where we are entitled to be. We need to re-lay the path for future generations, actively.

TESS: What does a 'typical day' (if there is such a thing) look like for you in your role as General Counsel, Digital and Technology, and Privacy Officer at Seven West Media?

BECK: A typical day for me starts with wrangling my kids out the door – always a good start in order to get work done! This is closely followed by a coffee, and on a really good day, maybe even a dip in the ocean if I'm lucky – there's no better way to clear the brain. Then it's a deep breath and dive into my day at work – every day is full to the brim with problems to solve, challenges to overcome and people to help.

For me, with a busy in-house practice and part of a lean team and working across a broad range of work, it's always about keeping all the balls in the air, for myself and for anyone I am advising or assisting at the time. It's fast paced, it's varied, and people appreciate what I do for them. This is what it's all about for me – helping others achieve their brief – it's very rewarding. To lead the legal side of technology, digital and data is an exciting space to work in as a lawyer in a media business – we are constantly building things, transforming the way people consume content, and understanding and building our audience in innovative ways using data. It's always very commercial and it's always very current.

TESS: I'm sure you've had some great mentors and role models in your career – can you share the best piece of work-related advice you've received?

BECK: I'd say I have learned more by watching and observing than by direct advice. But I have certainly made many observations:

- Don't just come up with the problems – come up with the solutions. I have worked by that for many years now, and it makes for a great commercial approach.



- I also think I have learned, by watching great role models, that it's no point bottling things up or panicking when things get hard – a problem shared is a problem halved, and I love a good brainstorm in this way.
- Be reasonable. Be kind.
- Remove the emotion.
- Be clear. Remember the goal – don't get stuck in the weeds.
- And certainly, that a sense of humour and ability to keep things in perspective goes a long way.

There are too many to choose from!

TESS: What developments do you see on the horizon in 2022 for the communications and media legal landscape?

BECK: The developments I'm closest to are those coming out of the Digital Platforms Inquiry – competition, privacy, ad tech regulation – we will continue to see the communications and media landscape evolve this year in those areas. The government is levelling the playing field between traditional media and the big digital platforms – it is a pivotal time for media in this country.

Of course privacy law reform is massive in itself, and is going to have a significant impact on not only the communications and media industry, but across all industries.

TESS: What advice would you give to the next generation of female leaders in the industry?

BECK: Back yourself. Be yourself.