

January Spotlight Member

Lauri Avila

I was born in Portland, Oregon back in the 60's. My father was a police officer in the city so I grew up learning to be street smart and to respect the law. Little did I know, I would work in the legal field later in life. I ended up in Santa Clara, CA at the age of six when many expressways were orchards, and several tech companies were then canneries. I consider myself a late bloomer when it comes to degrees and education. I took a ten-year detour to Switzerland after working in the restaurant and travel industry for ten years. Learning a new language (Swiss German) and the culture was in itself a learning experience but I realized when I came back to Silicon Valley, I needed to do some catching up as The Valley of Hearts turned into Silicon Valley and was thriving and extremely competitive. I ended up graduating in my 40's through the Extended Education Program at Saint Mary's College while working full time and received my Management BA. Truthfully, I am a third generation Executive Assistant at heart and love what I do, it's just the titles and duties have changed.

How did I get into the legal field? Monster.com (yes, you can giggle now). I was in between jobs as an EA and the position for Executive Assistant popped up to work for the General Counsel. I thought, General Counsel? Legal field? I decided to go for the interview at Extreme Networks, Inc. in Santa Clara and got the job. Three General Counsel's later, I was still there. I decided I needed to keep up on my education because of my age and competition so I decided to go through the online Paralegal program through Boston University. I received my Paralegal Certificate and shortly after completed the test to become a Notary Public. I ended up following my boss over to Barracuda Networks. We took the company public in 2013. I basically learned as I went, asked lots of questions, worked with all departments and got the jobs done; extremely challenging to say the least!

Working in the corporate legal field for almost eight years now, I have experienced so many different challenges and teaming up with all of the departments in order to help make the company successful. I handle the Patent Incentive Bonus Program, M&A's (owning data rooms), working closely with the finance department to get through audits, i.e. providing legal letters, Board & Committee minutes, litigation updates, calendaring etc., We also work closely with our outside counsel firms who handle our litigation, trademarks and general corporate matters. Basically, I jump in where needed. The last project management legal task was to help get a new parking lot built which entailed bull-dozing down two houses in a residential-commercial zoned neighborhood, working with the neighbors and the City of Campbell, learning about ADA compliance, shrubs and trees, lighting etc. What's this have to do with working in the corporate legal world? Believe me, there were plenty of legal issues to address and hurdles to jump over but now, it's off to the next challenging job!

Continued education and hands on experience is important. I've been a member with SCCoLPA for a few years now and was introduced to the group through our past President Maria Oliveira Patterson. She said it would be a great learning experience for me and that the group is a lot of fun!! Well, she was right and I look forward to making more memories with SCCoLPA, LSI and other county chapters and to continue my education in the legal world with the wonderful presenters and programs they have to offer.