MEMBER

TARA SUGIYAMA POTASHNIK

Chief of Staff and Partner,
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Hometown
The Bay Area, California

Fun Fact
I am a dancer.

Describe your journey in the financial services industry and how your career has evolved to your current position.

The genesis of my journey into the financial services and privacy law fields dates back to my days at the UMICH Law Quad. As a law student before the Great Recession hit, I had the good fortune of crossing paths with two professors who would greatly influence the trajectory of my legal career.

One of the first courses to capture my interest was one on International Finance taught by Professor Michael S. Barr. I had no prior background in finance but found the subject matter to be fascinating in large part because he was engaging and beyond patient with us as we sought to digest the complex material and understand policy implications of what we were learning.

The other course leaving a lasting impression on me was a joint Law and Public Policy School Congressional Oversight & Executive Branch class that I took from Professor Marvin Krislov. Taking the theory we learned in class, and applying it to current events, I ended up writing a paper that would become my published Note on "The NSA Domestic Surveillance Program: An Analysis of Congressional Oversight During an Era of One-Party Rule."

Upon my arrival at Venable following graduation, I continued to pursue both my interests in financial services and privacy when I was placed in the Regulatory Practice Group where I was assigned to the Financial Services and Privacy subgroups. Ron Glancz, who I knew as an always smiling fellow UMICH Law grad who never once hinted at his many accomplishments in the financial services field, took me under his wing alongside the others in the group. They all began to integrate me into their work projects, took me to Exchequer Club meetings, and of course encouraged my involvement with WHF, with one team member who would later become a WHF President going out of her way to send me the WHF application and then appointing me to a leadership position within the organization. She had more faith in my ability to begin contributing to the financial services community than I did. At the same time, the Co-Chairs of Venable's Privacy practice, Stu Ingis and Milo Cividanes, began to mentor me in the burgeoning area of privacy law. Supportive of my development in both financial services and privacy, they encouraged my involvement with the American Bar Association's Consumer Financial Services Committee where I served as a Young Lawyer Liaison to the Electronic Financial Services Subcommittee and later as Co-Vice Chair of the Privacy Subcommittee.

As my career at Venable has progressed over the years, my practice as a Partner at the firm now focuses on providing responsive and creative counsel to clients to help them achieve their business goals. The nature of my legal practice spans: industry self-regulatory code and coalition building; legislative and regulatory advocacy; compliance counseling; regulatory and congressional investigations; and crisis response. On any given day, I work with a number of clients and prospects: advising CEOs about governance matters; responding to inquiries from Government Affairs Counsel about pending and newly-passed legislation and regulations; lobbying on the Hill for the passage or modification of legislative bills that impact our clients; drafting comments to regulatory agencies on pending regulation; authoring white papers for our clients; guiding In-House Counsel at startups about building "privacy by design" concepts into their innovative business models; interfacing with PR and communications teams on behalf of our clients; convening meetings comprised of U.S. and international-based c-suite, government affairs, and technologists to reach consensus on self-regulatory industry matters; and identifying opportunities to provide additional value to our clients by cross-selling and connecting them with different Venable practice groups and offices.

Woven into my practice on the organizational management side, I also serve as Venable's first Chief of Staff where I assist our firm Chairman Stu Ingis in firm management matters aimed at strengthening our processes and quality of output so that our firm can continue to thrive.

What do you love most about what you do?
I love being part of a work family comprised of caring people with the utmost integrity who together make work more than a job. We work as a team to find creative solutions for our clients that extend beyond the legal, and help evolve our firm and see ways of resolving matters across various functionalities and departments in a manner that others might not have the opportunity to see or imagine.

Hobby(ies)?
As a mother of two young children, I've lost track of my hobbies.

How long have you been a member of WHF?
I have been a member of WHF since 2009.

Please describe your involvement with WHF.
I served as Co-Chair of WHF's Legislative Task Force. In this capacity, we helped organize "meet & greets" on Capitol Hill with Members of Congress for the WHF membership, legislative receptions, and other events. During the Dodd-Frank debates, as a junior associate I remember observing the legislators at work from afar during their hearings, and then conducting in-person fireside chats with them at WHF events that we organized. After those marathon sessions, it got to the point where I could recognize their voices when they did radio appearances even without seeing them.

What have you gained from being a member?
WHF opened doors for me by providing me with leadership opportunities early in my legal career, and to this day serves as a professional support community.

How do you make the best use of your day? (think techniques to enhance productivity, time management, time out, meditation/prayer, etc.)
In the theater, we learn how to put on productions with moving pieces, diverse cast members with different skillsets, fast costume changes, body doubles and trap doors that allow us to be in multiple places at the same time, scenery and music that set the stage, and live audiences with high expectations.

At my firm, I am part of a special team that works diligently to help ensure that the needs of our colleagues and clients are met through a whole host of systems and techniques not unlike those seen (or unseen) in the theater. In my office, I have a painting by Kinkade that's meant to provide a space for quiet meditation amidst the frenetic pace that typifies a usual day. When I find those fleeting moments to sit down and enjoy the painting, I can't help but smile. When our team does its job well, by analogy, it's hard to tell whether the painting is by Thomas Kinkade himself or Thomas Kinkade Studios. I could go into the details of how we do this, but where would the magic be in that?

Who or what inspires you?
"It's kind of fun to do the impossible." *Walt Disney*

What is the best advice you have ever received?
It is okay to break the mold; what you will do and contribute someday may not yet exist and is awaiting your arrival.