

## Vicki Bradin Podcast | 11th February 2025

Emma Carroll..... 00:00:01

Welcome to the Business Leaders Voice podcast. I'm Emma Carroll, head of content here at Source, and today we're going to be discussing moving with pace and particularly the role of the general counsel in building a culture of innovation and of speed. And I'm really delighted to welcome Vicki Braden to the podcast. And Vicki is general counsel and company secretary at Sage. Vicki, big welcome to the podcast.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:00:27

Thank you. Great to be here.

Emma Carroll..... 00:00:29

Can you kick things off by telling us a little bit about yourself, your career, and I'd love to hear a little bit about maybe what drives you as well.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:00:36

Yeah, absolutely. So I am the general counsel and company secretary at Sage, as you said.

Emma Carroll..... 00:00:40

I've.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:00:41

I've been there since 2016 and also a member of the executive leadership team there too. So I have had a fairly traditional path in my legal career. So I started off, as many lawyers do, in private practice. I worked super hard and became a corporate lawyer. And I worked at different sized firms, including Magic Circle firms. And probably about 15 years ago, I decided that that wasn't really what I wanted to do and I went in house. And for my whole career in house, I've been in technology companies.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:01:12

I was in a company called Misys originally, which was a banking software company, and then moved to Sage, which has a lot of similarities, but also quite a lot of differences in terms of the customer base it serves and things like that. But. But yes, always been a sort of technology lawyer for my whole of my in house, in terms of what motivates me and drives me so personally, I've always been somebody who likes to end up in a different place from where I started. So. And I'm also somebody who really enjoys working with others, bringing others on, and working collaboratively in a team. I really thrive in high performance teams and really enjoy that kind of collective success. So in terms of work, I've always been very attracted to opportunities that mean I can take something and make it a little bit better or evolve it in a certain way, put my spin on it, I suppose. And then, you know, I always enjoy working with teams, be it my peer set, leading others, working through others, bringing others on and making them successful.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:02:18

So those are the things that, that motivate me day to day.

Emma Carroll..... 00:02:20

Okay, thank you. I feel we've really got a feel for you now, so thank you. And when we first chatted, I was really surprised about the sort of, the really broad scope of your role. So tell us a little bit about that and maybe if you could throw in what your big goals are as general counsel at the moment, sure.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:02:37

So I've been extremely lucky in my career, particularly at Sage, where I've had the opportunity to really grow my remit. So I started off in 2016 as the GC and obviously had the. The legal team and the company secretarial team. So essentially the governance team underneath me. And then my next foray into wider leadership was I took on cyber security, of which I knew nothing about at the time. So that was. That was a big learning curve.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:02:59

And then I on risk and controls and assurance and then procurement, and then more recently data governance. So very, very fortunate to be able to have a fantastic group of people with different skill sets that work with me. And, you know, one of the things that me and my team have spent a lot of time about thinking about actually, in the last kind of couple of years, is

what's the common thread between us, what unites us, because we're all quite different disciplines, we're all different people, different backgrounds, but there's commonality there. And the way that we've talked, what we are there to do and what our ambition is, is around creating trust as a foundation for sustainable growth. So, in short, that's all about how do we bring speed and flexibility for our business without compromising on things like business trust or accountability. And so we focus not just on the what we do, but we also try to focus very much on how we do it and holding the company accountable to the how it does things as well. And so we try to do that in four broad ways. And these are our strategic objectives as a function, as a team.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:04:11

So the first one is around building on the core brand promise of trust. So what that looks like is making sure that our products are secure, that data is protected, and making sure that all of our stakeholders are served by excellence in those areas. And also things like sustainable procurement, which is becoming a bigger and bigger aspect of procurement, and the way that we buy services. And we're also around enabling the business to go faster. So we use things like governance and risk and assurance to really drive efficient and effective decision making and to really help the business improve and scale and take risks in accordance with the appetite it sets for itself. So to knowingly lean into risks and also to lean out of risks too. We also seek to protect the company's interests, the best interests, with integrity. So that's all about making sure that we don't lose sight of our core values.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:05:06

And we empower and we challenge and we proactively drive change throughout the organization. And then as a function, we also focus very much on our own culture, our own inclusive culture. So we want to build a high performing team that's really built on the principle of inclusivity and bringing diverse voices and thoughts and viewpoints together.

Emma Carroll..... 00:05:30

Okay. And I'd love to pull on one of those threads that you talked about there. You specifically talked about using governance to like drive speed. And I'm really fascinated with that because perhaps unfairly. Tell me what you think. Sometimes general counsels, legal departments, same as with a cfo, they can be thought of the people who would potentially be pointing out all the risks, the people who might be saying, no, the thing, people who might be slowing things down. How do you use governance and your role to actually move things at pace?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:06:01

Yeah, so I think that's a stereotype. I'm not sure it's a fair stereotype. I'm sure the CFOs would say the same thing. And I don't think it's how modern genes VCs really work anymore. Because we have to be the persons who point out the risks and help the business understand the risks it's taking. But we also have to be part of the solution to those risks and find ways through and help the company and our colleagues navigate through risk and ambiguity. And so, you know, I'm a big fan of, of

saying that yes, there's some risks that we want to avoid, but there's also some risks that we want to lean actively into.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:06:35

And so it's very much about facing into those and understanding what that means. And so the way that we use things like governance, we spend a lot of time over the last couple of years focusing the business on its risk appetite. So in respect of the sort of key risks that we see in our business, what are those that we want to mitigate and move away from and manage downwards, and where are those areas that we really, really want to lean into and take more risk? And moreover, what does that look like? So it's very easy to say you want to take more risk, but actually that can sometimes feel quite hard for businesses to take more risk. And it's about taking sensible risks and kind of fully understood risks. So one of the analogies we gave, we gave a talk to some of the executive leadership team a couple of years ago, and we use the analogy of a very expensive sports car that has brake calipers, which I'm, I'm reliably informed the brighter the brake caliber, the more expensive it tends to be. So the ones you want are the sort of bright red ones, but you know, that's that we use that analogy because we are trying to convey the fact that, you know, expensive sports cars show off their brake protections because, you know, you can go faster if you've got the things that will protect you from the worst happening.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:07:52

And so that's how we very much see our role. How do we help the business through governance, through risk appetite, through assessing what could go wrong or what we might want to do more of to really move at pace.

Emma Carroll..... 00:08:02

Okay, really interesting, thank you. And you've talked quite a bit about culture as well, which is really interesting. And some of those things you've talked about there, some of these controls, I guess, are part of culture. They do feed into culture. But is there anything else you would pull out that really creates a culture that can move fast?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:08:20

Yeah, I think in terms of understanding, in terms of things like decision making, it's about a lot of, for me, it's a lot about empowerment. So really spending time upfront thinking about what is the outcome that is trying to be achieved, what is the direction of travel that we are trying to go in, what is the end goal that we are trying to reach, and then being really clear on how long that we think that's going to take, and then putting in place the structure that enables the teams to get on with it, to move at pace, to make the progress, but regularly assessing where we are in that and being ruthlessly transparent about how far we've achieved our goals and where things aren't working. And part of my job is to set that tone with my team, let them do the work, let them get on with it, empower them to do that. But I check in regularly and help them understand whether there's blocks in the

way or there's things that are slowing us down so that we can remove those and kind of move faster.

Emma Carroll..... 00:09:19

Okay, and I'm just going to parachute back up a moment, and I'm wondering about the. This whole podcast really is about speed, is about delivering at pace. Why is that so important for Sage specifically, would you say?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:09:31

So we are a tech company and technology is moving incredibly fast at the moment. And so as a tech company, we have to stay ahead of the technology trends that are going on in the world. You know, Sage, as an organization, many years ago, missed a technology trend. So it wasn't one of the first companies to go into the cloud. And this was prior to my time and the current leadership time, but it paid a heavy price for that in terms of having to then play a lot of catch up. And I'VE been part of the team that's kind of led that and we're where we want to be now, but it's been hard yards getting there. So, you know, with things like Generative AI, we've been very determined to be ahead of that particular curve and to make sure that our products are first to market, that we're leading the charge because you set the tone and competitors follow you.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:10:22



So staying ahead of those trends, making sure that we are in the pack and we are leading that pack, is a critically important part. And you have to move fast. You have to move fast. You know, things are developing so quickly with things like AI that if you aren't out there talking about your product, launching your product, testing it with customers, others are already there.

Emma Carroll..... 00:10:41

Yeah. And how do you decide if something is the real thing or is a fad or do you just have to go for it anyway and see where you get to? Yeah.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:10:50

So I think, you know, if you think about it in terms of the technology that we release, we were pretty definitive that Generative AI was. I don't think it's a fad. I don't think it's going anywhere. And you know, as you say, as a business, we've used AI and machine learning capabilities for years. Those aren't brand new to us. Gen AI is a bit new, but AI and ML are not new to us. So we've been working, looking at those and you know, we think less about what is the technology.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:11:17

So it's very easy to get seduced by the idea of doing things that are super wizzy, but they've got to have a practical application. So the thing that we've thought really hard and long about when we've been looking at our technology and Gen AI in particular, is it's got

to have a purpose that our customers will recognize. So we focused a lot on use cases, we focused a lot on how do we eliminate repetitive tasks, how does it become a sort of assistant for our customers to help them with their own productivity, with their own pace. And so those kind of technologies I think are here to stay and have always been here to stay. So it's really thinking about what is the technology there to solve and what pain points is it there to relieve in our customers. And I think that's where we've, that's what's always been guiding us.

Emma Carroll..... 00:12:02

Okay, and is there a genai that you're most excited about that you're using at the moment?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:12:08

So as a, as an organization, we obviously have our own gen AI assistance called Sage Copilot, which we've launched and we are actively testing that with customers now and getting some really good feedback about how it's helping customers with their day to day challenges and taking some of the administrative burden off them. So I'm really excited about what that can do because our customers have a very long list of things they would like us to take off their plate. And then internally with my team, again, we've been using AI in different ways for a long time. So things like our CyberSecurity team use AI to monitor cyber risk that can do that far quicker, far more accurately than any human being. And one of the things that me and my team were talking about recently is we often look at risks from different angles. For example, so if we're

buying a new service or we're releasing a product that can go through many of the hands of different parts of my team, be it cyber, be it legal, be it data, and we think there's probably a way that we can pull together use using data and analytics and AI to really understand more deeply our kind of risk assessments, our individual risk assessments collectively. And does that mean that actually we have the confidence to move forward in areas or are there areas where, you know, we might want to take a step back and how can we augment that with external information about breaches or about legal risk etc, to really ensure that we are taking very rounded business decision?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:13:32

So that's an application that, you know, we're thinking about how we can use it in the future.

Emma Carroll..... 00:13:37

Yeah. A lot of the things you're talking to me about and that are about pace, seems to me you're really big on collaboration. Yeah. Any tips on really making collaboration work? You've got such a diverse team doing so many different things.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:13:51

Yeah, I'd say that communication is pretty central to that. And again, myself, my team were talking about this just the other day, bringing ourselves together regularly and talking about where there are shared challenges, where there are different opinions

about how we may want to do things. So all of my team will approach things from different angles and they'll often, not always, but they'll often primarily be focused on the problem they're trying to solve or the need they have. And so how do we make sure that we continue to talk to each other so that we're not duplicating, so we're not making things more difficult for our colleagues than they need to be. We're not doubling up our questions, we're not asking the same questions twice. And then how do we really sit down and quite, in a quite disciplined way and kind of red line those things or red pen those things which are not making our colleagues experience better and therefore slowing us down because people aren't engaging in our processes necessarily or we're not getting the information that we need. So thinking always from the standpoint of like, how do we get our colleagues to engage with this, how do we make sure that our processes and our workflows are as intuitive as possible and are as simple as possible, while still making sure that we all get the data we need and then we share that collectively.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:15:14

For me, that's all about communication and just constantly talking about these things because otherwise we tend to, we run the risk of going off into silos and solving our own problems.

Emma Carroll..... 00:15:24

Yes, yep, that all makes really good sense. And I'm wondering, we've obviously we've talked about a lot about going at pace, but are there any times where you just have to go slowly?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:15:35

Yes. I mean, it sounds really obvious to say it, but there are some problems that you just cannot solve overnight. And I think one of the, one of the challenges of my role is that I tend to look after areas where compliance or cyber security or data protection, where if there are areas that we want to improve, people tend to be quite anxious about that. They want improvements to happen very quickly because they're areas of risk and there's a lot of potential exposure in that. So my job is to help the business understand where sometimes moving quickly will solve a surface problem or give an inch deep solution. And actually the bigger solution, the better solution, the more long term solution, is to do a more programmatic, slightly longer term program of change. And so you know, the examples where we've seen that in particular in areas like cyber security, where we're obviously constantly keeping our products up to date and secure, but that we've gone through a period of time where we had programs that have taken a year to do, or two years to do or three years to do, to do them in the way that we want to, because they're not just about technical change, they're often about culture change too.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:16:42

And I think the key on those kind of programs is that just you have to resist this temptation of just saying, well, that's going to take a very long time. And the risk is that it gets sort of kicked into the long grass. So to avoid that, what, what we tend to do is that we are very deliberate about where are we trying to get to and make that as measurable as possible. And then we Set out a time

frame. And they're often very ambitious time frames, but we set out time frame for ourselves and then we measure that every month and we meet every month. We share it with executive leadership team and our board every month. And we hold ourselves to account on it. And if we.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:17:21

And we're ruthlessly transparent. So those things just help give comfort, I think, where pieces of work can take a longer time, that, that they are moving and that things are happening.

Emma Carroll..... 00:17:33

And Sage is a large, established footsie business. How do you keep ahead and maybe pull in some learnings throughout your career on this one?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:17:43

Yeah, sure.

Emma Carroll..... 00:17:43

How to big businesses like that keep ahead of their, like smaller, more agile competitors?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:17:48

So I think the key, the first thing is you must never be complacent or arrogant. And sometimes I have seen that in my career where big competitors feel that smaller competitors, sure, they serve a niche, but they're tiny, that we're well ahead of them. They'll never catch us up. So having respect for your competitors, studying your competitors, not just those that are immediately side by side, but also with you, but also those that are in the rear view mirror because those smaller companies can get bigger and they can move very, very quickly. So being really humble, I think in that and, and really studying your competition, listening to your customers is another thing that we have found. And that means that's the good and the bad, right? It's easy to gravitate to the good stuff, but it's also about the bad and doing something about it.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:18:34

How are you changing the pain points that your products, for example, can create for customers? So we do a lot of that. I'd say from an organizational perspective, the other things that we've spent time thinking about is our shape. So I think there is a tendency maybe when companies get bigger that they have to bring in more people. They can bloat a little. And so spans and layers and management layers can really slow you down. And when you add in more people, it doesn't necessarily make you more productive. So you've got to think very carefully about the shape of your team, about your spans and your layers, so that decision making and communication isn't getting slow.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:19:15

And then I think the other thing that we've spent time thinking about is what do you centralize and then what do you keep close to the ground, close to the action. So my personal view is that teams like mine and finance and people teams, they benefit from having a sort of centralized, guiding mind, I guess, at the center, because I think that makes them more efficient. I think that can make them more effective. Whereas if you've got competitive insight teams, they need to be close to the sales teams because they need to be able to respond, they need to take information on board and then they need to help their sales teams and the product teams to respond to change. So it's just as you, as you grow as an organization and as you seek to stay ahead, I think these are the things that. That we found we do.

Emma Carroll..... 00:19:57

Okay, Interesting. And you talk there about fast decision making and some of the research that we're doing here at the source. We always look at business confidence and what's making businesses feel confident or unconfident. And in the current market, with so many things unknowable at the moment, one of the big things that we're told is making teams lack confidence is they don't feel their leadership teams are able to make quick decisions decisions. Is that something you've come across in your career?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:20:27

I would say that I have experienced that in my career. So the example I was giving earlier on where, you know, there was a just



not responding quickly to a new technology and having seen the consequences of that, of just, I guess a doubling down on the direction of travel at that point in time and not really keeping open eyes and ears to what was happening, caused us at SAGE to lose time, to lose market share. And again, turning that around and moving the company in a different direction towards that new technology is something that we've done successfully, but it has taken us a lot of time. And so responding to that change was something that, at that point in time, I think it was not done successfully. So I've certainly felt the consequences of that and how hard it can be to kind of recover.

Emma Carroll..... 00:21:27

Yeah, interesting. And obviously sitting on that top team and observing ones that you have done in the past as well, what would be your tips for people externally to help top teams make really robust but quick, fast decisions?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:21:42

So I think first and foremost, it's always about being really clear about what is the problem that you're trying to solve. So you'd be surprised. Sometimes it's not always clear what the problem is that people are trying to solve and breaking those problems down. You know, leadership teams don't tend to focus on small problems. They tend to focus on quite big sticky issues. So, you know, what is it that you're trying to resolve? Are you looking at the symptom of a problem or are you actually looking at the underlying issue?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:22:06

And if there's a fast time solution or and there's a slower Time solution, like how do you separate those two things out? So breaking a problem down. I think also getting the data that you need or at least getting the best data that you can is really important. I think you've also got to try and avoid being too subjective or giving opinion and let the data do the talking. What's really important as well is I think, listening to people who know what they're talking about and those may not be the people at the top table because they're not necessarily the ones in the trenches day to day and seeing things. So seeking those and being humble and listening to those views as well. But I think what's also important is that don't drive for consensus. Consensus may not always be available.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:22:52

So we talk about, disagree and commit. So can we get to a point where we can live with a decision even if we don't all agree with it? But what's really, really important is that we all get behind that decision and then being really clear on what the decision is made. So again, sometimes when you think you've made a decision, one of the best things to do is go around the room and ask everybody what they think has been decided and see if that's all the same. Surprisingly, it's not always the same because people hear things differently, but being really, really clear about what the decision is that's been taken and then really communicating that decision. So I think sometimes in leadership teams, because an issue has been talked about a lot, you think we've done this, we know it,

there's nothing to say anymore. But for team members and other parts of the organization, it might be the first time they're hearing something. So keep communicating it.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:23:44

Have that absolute clarity of the communication. And then I think post a decision, it's all about how do you empower others to execute and not get in the way. But as a leadership team, your job is to check back in and assess how things are going. So when my boss, Steve Hare, often talks about being a manager in that sense, you let the players play on the pitch, you don't get on the pitch with the players. And then at the half time or at the end of the time, you, you ruthlessly dissect how the performance was. But you've got to be really clear where your boundary is and where other colleagues need to step in and perform.

Emma Carroll..... 00:24:19

And you don't be one of those angry parents swearing on the no, no, no, don't do.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:24:23

Try to avoid that.

Emma Carroll..... 00:24:26

Fantastic. And I thought that was really interesting when you were talking about how you might not all agree. You have to get to that

point. Well, you get to an agreement even though you don't want to agree. Any tips on that? How does that look in practice?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:24:38

It's. It's often about focusing less on individual views or egos or I guess the desire to have your decision be the decision that's taken and putting all of that ego to one side and just asking ourselves, what is the problem that we need to solve right now? What is what. What is the perspective of from a customer or from a colleague? And, and trying to center that decision away from just the individuals in the room. And so I think when you approach problems like that and people have their views heard, people get to say their piece. It's not, you know, it's a respectful environment.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:25:18

But at the end of the day, we are there to solve customer problems and we're there to help our colleagues be successful. And if you can neutralize some of that, it just focuses people on the outcomes more. I think so. And we are pretty successful at that. It's not always easy though. It's not always easy, but that is the only way sometimes you can make decisions quickly.

Emma Carroll..... 00:25:39

Yeah. Thank you. And a lot of the people listening to this podcast will be leaders in consulting or leaders in professional services. And so I wanted to ask you a little bit about working with consultants and maybe some trends there. And I'm wondering if

whether what you're buying or how you're buying from consulting firms is changing at.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:26:00

So when we work with consultants, typically what we're seeking to buy is experience that we don't have or expertise in a particular area that we don't have. So, you know, we're really careful about when we go out and procure services from consultants because we have lots of talented, capable people. But, but sometimes we need that external viewpoint and we need that external strength. And when I am working with consultants, I'm always looking for those that can quite tailored and bespoke answers that work for our business. They don't just bring a sort of generic solution or something that fitted, you know, the last five companies that they've sold that to. And we have our views, you know, we know what works for our business, we know how our business works. So making sure that that is tailored to us, that works for us is really, really important.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:26:57

So. So the consultants that we choose to work with are those that understand our culture, that understand what we're trying to attain, that help us co create solutions and make sure that what we are then left with at the end of all of that is something that will operate successfully in the business.

Emma Carroll..... 00:27:15

I'm interested. You said that there would need to be a culture, they would understand your culture. Have you ever seen a culture clash? What would that look like?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:27:24

Yeah, so I guess, you know, one of the programs that we ran a few years ago, we worked with a consultant around control development and what ended up being created was a very long list of controls that when you try to apply them pragmatically in the work environment, didn't quite gel with us. And that's because, you know, we have a myriad of systems. People do things in different ways. So, so, you know, trying to implement those things became incredibly difficult for us. And we, I should also say that that was a several years ago. We've, we've had more successful projects since then in a similar vein. But it's about, okay, understanding what is, how do people work in this organization?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:28:16

What time constraints do they have around themselves? What are the things that they're being asked to do and how do you really pinpoint, you know, what is the thing that needs to change and how do you make it not an increased admin burden or something that's going to just suck up time for people in ways they just can't spend and therefore they just ignore it versus something that can quickly become embedded in the day to day ways that people work.

Emma Carroll..... 00:28:41

Okay, thank you. I was really interested that you said that one of the most important things is that a firm would understand your business, would understand your journey, would understand your ways of working, your culture. And that seems a very, a very people related thing, a very relationship related thing. Do you ever think that like AI Gen AI could have that kind of relationship with you from a consulting firm or do you feel it would always be about people? What's your feeling there?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:29:11

I think that there will, there will be a place for Gen AI in terms of giving you a basis of understanding funding. I think it's fantastic at present for assimilating data, giving insights, but I still believe that you will always need the human element on top to really translate that and then understand how it's going to work in your organization. So for me, AI isn't really going to replace people or consultants or lawyers or finance people because at present, and I don't think he's ever going to get to this, it's not going to be able to exercise judgment in the moment moment, because that's all about relationships, that's all about communication and it's all about how we talk to each other and what is said and what is also not said. So I think the role of consultants can be. They can certainly use those toolings to help just get that basis. But I don't see a day where I'm going to be consulting with a Gen AI tool exclusively, and they won't.

Emma Carroll..... 00:30:13

Be consulting with a Gen AI GC as well. Okay, thank you so much. And we do always like to end the podcast on a really practical takeaway, something that somebody listening can go away and implement. And I'm thinking maybe a GC who's just setting out on their career or one that really wants to progress. What's the one thing you would pull out that can really help them create a great impact in the business they in?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:30:41

So I think for any GC new or aspiring, what's really important is to find ways to be more than just the lawyer in the room. And I think it's really important that you think hard about what is the value that you bring beyond just your legal skills and channel that. And so lawyers have so many skills that can be deployed beyond just the field of legal. I think lawyers ask great questions. I think they can prod and probe people. They can assimilate data extremely quickly. They can often be sort of the neutral person in the room.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:31:20

And through doing that, I think they can help the teams that they are part of to get to better answers, better decisions. They can challenge, and they can manage conflict very effectively. And I think they also have those skills that they can push into other areas of the business, too. You know, I was saying, saying I had, I did cyber security, I knew nothing about cyber security, but if you deploy the same questioning mindset and probing mindset, you can be effective. So my advice is to. To. To really use those skill sets to branch out and become more than just the legal expert.



Emma Carroll..... 00:31:54

Fantastic. Vicki Braden, thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:31:58

It's been a real pleasure. Thank you for having me.

Emma Carroll..... 00:00:01

Welcome to the Business Leaders Voice podcast. I'm Emma Carroll, head of content here at Source, and today we're going to be discussing moving with pace and particularly the role of the general counsel in building a culture of innovation and of speed. And I'm really delighted to welcome Vicki Braden to the podcast. And Vicki is general counsel and company secretary at Sage. Vicki, big welcome to the podcast.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:00:27

Thank you. Great to be here.

Emma Carroll..... 00:00:29

Can you kick things off by telling us a little bit about yourself, your career, and I'd love to hear a little bit about maybe what drives you as well.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:00:36

Yeah, absolutely. So I am the general counsel and company secretary at Sage, as you said.

Emma Carroll..... 00:00:40

I've.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:00:41

I've been there since 2016 and also a member of the executive leadership team there too. So I have had a fairly traditional path in my legal career. So I started off, as many lawyers do, in private practice. I worked super hard and became a corporate lawyer. And I worked at different sized firms, including Magic Circle firms. And probably about 15 years ago, I decided that that wasn't really what I wanted to do and I went in house. And for my whole career in house, I've been in technology companies.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:01:12

I was in a company called Misys originally, which was a banking software company, and then moved to Sage, which has a lot of similarities, but also quite a lot of differences in terms of the customer base it serves and things like that. But. But yes, always

been a sort of technology lawyer for my whole of my in house, in terms of what motivates me and drives me so personally, I've always been somebody who likes to end up in a different place from where I started. So. And I'm also somebody who really enjoys working with others, bringing others on, and working collaboratively in a team. I really thrive in high performance teams and really enjoy that kind of collective success. So in terms of work, I've always been very attracted to opportunities that mean I can take something and make it a little bit better or evolve it in a certain way, put my spin on it, I suppose. And then, you know, I always enjoy working with teams, be it my peer set, leading others, working through others, bringing others on and making them successful.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:02:18

So those are the things that, that motivate me day to day.

Emma Carroll..... 00:02:20

Okay, thank you. I feel we've really got a feel for you now, so thank you. And when we first chatted, I was really surprised about the sort of, the really broad scope of your role. So tell us a little bit about that and maybe if you could throw in what your big goals are as general counsel at the moment, sure.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:02:37

So I've been extremely lucky in my career, particularly at Sage, where I've had the opportunity to really grow my remit. So I started

off in 2016 as the GC and obviously had the. The legal team and the company secretarial team. So essentially the governance team underneath me. And then my next foray into wider leadership was I took on cyber security, of which I knew nothing about at the time. So that was. That was a big learning curve.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:02:59

And then I on risk and controls and assurance and then procurement, and then more recently data governance. So very, very fortunate to be able to have a fantastic group of people with different skill sets that work with me. And, you know, one of the things that me and my team have spent a lot of time about thinking about actually, in the last kind of couple of years, is what's the common thread between us, what unites us, because we're all quite different disciplines, we're all different people, different backgrounds, but there's commonality there. And the way that we've talked, what we are there to do and what our ambition is, is around creating trust as a foundation for sustainable growth. So, in short, that's all about how do we bring speed and flexibility for our business without compromising on things like business trust or accountability. And so we focus not just on the what we do, but we also try to focus very much on how we do it and holding the company accountable to the how it does things as well. And so we try to do that in four broad ways. And these are our strategic objectives as a function, as a team.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:04:11

So the first one is around building on the core brand promise of trust. So what that looks like is making sure that our products are secure, that data is protected, and making sure that all of our stakeholders are served by excellence in those areas. And also things like sustainable procurement, which is becoming a bigger and bigger aspect of procurement, and the way that we buy services. And we're also around enabling the business to go faster. So we use things like governance and risk and assurance to really drive efficient and effective decision making and to really help the business improve and scale and take risks in accordance with the appetite it sets for itself. So to knowingly lean into risks and also to lean out of risks too. We also seek to protect the company's interests, the best interests, with integrity. So that's all about making sure that we don't lose sight of our core values.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:05:06

And we empower and we challenge and we proactively drive change throughout the organization. And then as a function, we also focus very much on our own culture, our own inclusive culture. So we want to build a high performing team that's really built on the principle of inclusivity and bringing diverse voices and thoughts and viewpoints together.

Emma Carroll..... 00:05:30

Okay. And I'd love to pull on one of those threads that you talked about there. You specifically talked about using governance to like drive speed. And I'm really fascinated with that because perhaps unfairly. Tell me what you think. Sometimes general counsels,

legal departments, same as with a cfo, they can be thought of the people who would potentially be pointing out all the risks, the people who might be saying, no, the thing, people who might be slowing things down. How do you use governance and your role to actually move things at pace?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:06:01

Yeah, so I think that's a stereotype. I'm not sure it's a fair stereotype. I'm sure the CFOs would say the same thing. And I don't think it's how modern genes VCs really work anymore. Because we have to be the persons who point out the risks and help the business understand the risks it's taking. But we also have to be part of the solution to those risks and find ways through and help the company and our colleagues navigate through risk and ambiguity. And so, you know, I'm a big fan of, of saying that yes, there's some risks that we want to avoid, but there's also some risks that we want to lean actively into.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:06:35

And so it's very much about facing into those and understanding what that means. And so the way that we use things like governance, we spend a lot of time over the last couple of years focusing the business on its risk appetite. So in respect of the sort of key risks that we see in our business, what are those that we want to mitigate and move away from and manage downwards, and where are those areas that we really, really want to lean into and take more risk? And moreover, what does that look like? So it's very easy to say you want to take more risk, but actually that

can sometimes feel quite hard for businesses to take more risk. And it's about taking sensible risks and kind of fully understood risks. So one of the analogies we gave, we gave a talk to some of the executive leadership team a couple of years ago, and we use the analogy of a very expensive sports car that has brake calipers, which I'm, I'm reliably informed the brighter the brake caliber, the more expensive it tends to be. So the ones you want are the sort of bright red ones, but you know, that's that we use that analogy because we are trying to convey the fact that, you know, expensive sports cars show off their brake protections because, you know, you can go faster if you've got the things that will protect you from the worst happening.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:07:52

And so that's how we very much see our role. How do we help the business through governance, through risk appetite, through assessing what could go wrong or what we might want to do more of to really move at pace.

Emma Carroll..... 00:08:02

Okay, really interesting, thank you. And you've talked quite a bit about culture as well, which is really interesting. And some of those things you've talked about there, some of these controls, I guess, are part of culture. They do feed into culture. But is there anything else you would pull out that really creates a culture that can move fast?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:08:20

Yeah, I think in terms of understanding, in terms of things like decision making, it's about a lot of, for me, it's a lot about empowerment. So really spending time upfront thinking about what is the outcome that is trying to be achieved, what is the direction of travel that we are trying to go in, what is the end goal that we are trying to reach, and then being really clear on how long that we think that's going to take, and then putting in place the structure that enables the teams to get on with it, to move at pace, to make the progress, but regularly assessing where we are in that and being ruthlessly transparent about how far we've achieved our goals and where things aren't working. And part of my job is to set that tone with my team, let them do the work, let them get on with it, empower them to do that. But I check in regularly and help them understand whether there's blocks in the way or there's things that are slowing us down so that we can remove those and kind of move faster.

Emma Carroll..... 00:09:19

Okay, and I'm just going to parachute back up a moment, and I'm wondering about the. This whole podcast really is about speed, is about delivering at pace. Why is that so important for Sage specifically, would you say?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:09:31

So we are a tech company and technology is moving incredibly fast at the moment. And so as a tech company, we have to stay ahead of the technology trends that are going on in the world. You know, Sage, as an organization, many years ago, missed a



technology trend. So it wasn't one of the first companies to go into the cloud. And this was prior to my time and the current leadership time, but it paid a heavy price for that in terms of having to then play a lot of catch up. And I'VE been part of the team that's kind of led that and we're where we want to be now, but it's been hard yards getting there. So, you know, with things like Generative AI, we've been very determined to be ahead of that particular curve and to make sure that our products are first to market, that we're leading the charge because you set the tone and competitors follow you.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:10:22

So staying ahead of those trends, making sure that we are in the pack and we are leading that pack, is a critically important part. And you have to move fast. You have to move fast. You know, things are developing so quickly with things like AI that if you aren't out there talking about your product, launching your product, testing it with customers, others are already there.

Emma Carroll..... 00:10:41

Yeah. And how do you decide if something is the real thing or is a fad or do you just have to go for it anyway and see where you get to? Yeah.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:10:50

So I think, you know, if you think about it in terms of the technology that we release, we were pretty definitive that

Generative AI was. I don't think it's a fad. I don't think it's going anywhere. And you know, as you say, as a business, we've used AI and machine learning capabilities for years. Those aren't brand new to us. Gen AI is a bit new, but AI and ML are not new to us. So we've been working, looking at those and you know, we think less about what is the technology.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:11:17

So it's very easy to get seduced by the idea of doing things that are super wizzy, but they've got to have a practical application. So the thing that we've thought really hard and long about when we've been looking at our technology and Gen AI in particular, is it's got to have a purpose that our customers will recognize. So we focused a lot on use cases, we focused a lot on how do we eliminate repetitive tasks, how does it become a sort of assistant for our customers to help them with their own productivity, with their own pace. And so those kind of technologies I think are here to stay and have always been here to stay. So it's really thinking about what is the technology there to solve and what pain points is it there to relieve in our customers. And I think that's where we've, that's what's always been guiding us.

Emma Carroll..... 00:12:02

Okay, and is there a genai that you're most excited about that you're using at the moment?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:12:08

So as a, as an organization, we obviously have our own gen AI assistance called Sage Copilot, which we've launched and we are actively testing that with customers now and getting some really good feedback about how it's helping customers with their day to day challenges and taking some of the administrative burden off them. So I'm really excited about what that can do because our customers have a very long list of things they would like us to take off their plate. And then internally with my team, again, we've been using AI in different ways for a long time. So things like our CyberSecurity team use AI to monitor cyber risk that can do that far quicker, far more accurately than any human being. And one of the things that me and my team were talking about recently is we often look at risks from different angles. For example, so if we're buying a new service or we're releasing a product that can go through many of the hands of different parts of my team, be it cyber, be it legal, be it data, and we think there's probably a way that we can pull together use using data and analytics and AI to really understand more deeply our kind of risk assessments, our individual risk assessments collectively. And does that mean that actually we have the confidence to move forward in areas or are there areas where, you know, we might want to take a step back and how can we augment that with external information about breaches or about legal risk etc, to really ensure that we are taking very rounded business decision?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:13:32

So that's an application that, you know, we're thinking about how we can use it in the future.

Emma Carroll..... 00:13:37

Yeah. A lot of the things you're talking to me about and that are about pace, seems to me you're really big on collaboration. Yeah. Any tips on really making collaboration work? You've got such a diverse team doing so many different things.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:13:51

Yeah, I'd say that communication is pretty central to that. And again, myself, my team were talking about this just the other day, bringing ourselves together regularly and talking about where there are shared challenges, where there are different opinions about how we may want to do things. So all of my team will approach things from different angles and they'll often, not always, but they'll often primarily be focused on the problem they're trying to solve or the need they have. And so how do we make sure that we continue to talk to each other so that we're not duplicating, so we're not making things more difficult for our colleagues than they need to be. We're not doubling up our questions, we're not asking the same questions twice. And then how do we really sit down and quite, in a quite disciplined way and kind of red line those things or red pen those things which are not making our colleagues experience better and therefore slowing us down because people aren't engaging in our processes necessarily or we're not getting the information that we need. So thinking always from the standpoint of like, how do we get our colleagues to engage with this, how do we make sure that our processes and our workflows are as intuitive as possible and are as simple as possible, while still making sure that we all get the data we need and then we share that collectively.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:15:14

For me, that's all about communication and just constantly talking about these things because otherwise we tend to, we run the risk of going off into silos and solving our own problems.

Emma Carroll..... 00:15:24

Yes, yep, that all makes really good sense. And I'm wondering, we've obviously we've talked about a lot about going at pace, but are there any times where you just have to go slowly?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:15:35

Yes. I mean, it sounds really obvious to say it, but there are some problems that you just cannot solve overnight. And I think one of the, one of the challenges of my role is that I tend to look after areas where compliance or cyber security or data protection, where if there are areas that we want to improve, people tend to be quite anxious about that. They want improvements to happen very quickly because they're areas of risk and there's a lot of potential exposure in that. So my job is to help the business understand where sometimes moving quickly will solve a surface problem or give an inch deep solution. And actually the bigger solution, the better solution, the more long term solution, is to do a more programmatic, slightly longer term program of change. And so you know, the examples where we've seen that in particular in areas like cyber security, where we're obviously constantly keeping our products up to date and secure, but that we've gone through a period of time where we had programs that

have taken a year to do, or two years to do or three years to do, to do them in the way that we want to, because they're not just about technical change, they're often about culture change too.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:16:42

And I think the key on those kind of programs is that just you have to resist this temptation of just saying, well, that's going to take a very long time. And the risk is that it gets sort of kicked into the long grass. So to avoid that, what, what we tend to do is that we are very deliberate about where are we trying to get to and make that as measurable as possible. And then we Set out a time frame. And they're often very ambitious time frames, but we set out time frame for ourselves and then we measure that every month and we meet every month. We share it with executive leadership team and our board every month. And we hold ourselves to account on it. And if we.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:17:21

And we're ruthlessly transparent. So those things just help give comfort, I think, where pieces of work can take a longer time, that, that they are moving and that things are happening.

Emma Carroll..... 00:17:33

And Sage is a large, established footsie business. How do you keep ahead and maybe pull in some learnings throughout your career on this one?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:17:43

Yeah, sure.

Emma Carroll..... 00:17:43

How to big businesses like that keep ahead of their, like smaller, more agile competitors?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:17:48

So I think the key, the first thing is you must never be complacent or arrogant. And sometimes I have seen that in my career where big competitors feel that smaller competitors, sure, they serve a niche, but they're tiny, that we're well ahead of them. They'll never catch us up. So having respect for your competitors, studying your competitors, not just those that are immediately side by side, but also with you, but also those that are in the rear view mirror because those smaller companies can get bigger and they can move very, very quickly. So being really humble, I think in that and, and really studying your competition, listening to your customers is another thing that we have found. And that means that's the good and the bad, right? It's easy to gravitate to the good stuff, but it's also about the bad and doing something about it.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:18:34

How are you changing the pain points that your products, for example, can create for customers? So we do a lot of that. I'd say from an organizational perspective, the other things that we've

spent time thinking about is our shape. So I think there is a tendency maybe when companies get bigger that they have to bring in more people. They can bloat a little. And so spans and layers and management layers can really slow you down. And when you add in more people, it doesn't necessarily make you more productive. So you've got to think very carefully about the shape of your team, about your spans and your layers, so that decision making and communication isn't getting slow.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:19:15

And then I think the other thing that we've spent time thinking about is what do you centralize and then what do you keep close to the ground, close to the action. So my personal view is that teams like mine and finance and people teams, they benefit from having a sort of centralized, guiding mind, I guess, at the center, because I think that makes them more efficient. I think that can make them more effective. Whereas if you've got competitive insight teams, they need to be close to the sales teams because they need to be able to respond, they need to take information on board and then they need to help their sales teams and the product teams to respond to change. So it's just as you, as you grow as an organization and as you seek to stay ahead, I think these are the things that. That we found we do.

Emma Carroll..... 00:19:57

Okay, Interesting. And you talk there about fast decision making and some of the research that we're doing here at the source. We always look at business confidence and what's making



businesses feel confident or unconfident. And in the current market, with so many things unknowable at the moment, one of the big things that we're told is making teams lack confidence is they don't feel their leadership teams are able to make quick decisions decisions. Is that something you've come across in your career?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:20:27

I would say that I have experienced that in my career. So the example I was giving earlier on where, you know, there was a just not responding quickly to a new technology and having seen the consequences of that, of just, I guess a doubling down on the direction of travel at that point in time and not really keeping open eyes and ears to what was happening, caused us at SAGE to lose time, to lose market share. And again, turning that around and moving the company in a different direction towards that new technology is something that we've done successfully, but it has taken us a lot of time. And so responding to that change was something that, at that point in time, I think it was not done successfully. So I've certainly felt the consequences of that and how hard it can be to kind of recover.

Emma Carroll..... 00:21:27

Yeah, interesting. And obviously sitting on that top team and observing ones that you have done in the past as well, what would be your tips for people externally to help top teams make really robust but quick, fast decisions?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:21:42

So I think first and foremost, it's always about being really clear about what is the problem that you're trying to solve. So you'd be surprised. Sometimes it's not always clear what the problem is that people are trying to solve and breaking those problems down. You know, leadership teams don't tend to focus on small problems. They tend to focus on quite big sticky issues. So, you know, what is it that you're trying to resolve? Are you looking at the symptom of a problem or are you actually looking at the underlying issue?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:22:06

And if there's a fast time solution or and there's a slower Time solution, like how do you separate those two things out? So breaking a problem down. I think also getting the data that you need or at least getting the best data that you can is really important. I think you've also got to try and avoid being too subjective or giving opinion and let the data do the talking. What's really important as well is I think, listening to people who know what they're talking about and those may not be the people at the top table because they're not necessarily the ones in the trenches day to day and seeing things. So seeking those and being humble and listening to those views as well. But I think what's also important is that don't drive for consensus. Consensus may not always be available.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:22:52

So we talk about, disagree and commit. So can we get to a point where we can live with a decision even if we don't all agree with it? But what's really, really important is that we all get behind that decision and then being really clear on what the decision is made. So again, sometimes when you think you've made a decision, one of the best things to do is go around the room and ask everybody what they think has been decided and see if that's all the same. Surprisingly, it's not always the same because people hear things differently, but being really, really clear about what the decision is that's been taken and then really communicating that decision. So I think sometimes in leadership teams, because an issue has been talked about a lot, you think we've done this, we know it, there's nothing to say anymore. But for team members and other parts of the organization, it might be the first time they're hearing something. So keep communicating it.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:23:44

Have that absolute clarity of the communication. And then I think post a decision, it's all about how do you empower others to execute and not get in the way. But as a leadership team, your job is to check back in and assess how things are going. So when my boss, Steve Hare, often talks about being a manager in that sense, you let the players play on the pitch, you don't get on the pitch with the players. And then at the half time or at the end of the time, you, you ruthlessly dissect how the performance was. But you've got to be really clear where your boundary is and where other colleagues need to step in and perform.

Emma Carroll..... 00:24:19

And you don't be one of those angry parents swearing on the no, no, no, don't do.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:24:23

Try to avoid that.

Emma Carroll..... 00:24:26

Fantastic. And I thought that was really interesting when you were talking about how you might not all agree. You have to get to that point. Well, you get to an agreement even though you don't want to agree. Any tips on that? How does that look in practice?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:24:38

It's. It's often about focusing less on individual views or egos or I guess the desire to have your decision be the decision that's taken and putting all of that ego to one side and just asking ourselves, what is the problem that we need to solve right now? What is what. What is the perspective of from a customer or from a colleague? And, and trying to center that decision away from just the individuals in the room. And so I think when you approach problems like that and people have their views heard, people get to say their piece. It's not, you know, it's a respectful environment.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:25:18

But at the end of the day, we are there to solve customer problems and we're there to help our colleagues be successful.

And if you can neutralize some of that, it just focuses people on the outcomes more. I think so. And we are pretty successful at that. It's not always easy though. It's not always easy, but that is the only way sometimes you can make decisions quickly.

Emma Carroll..... 00:25:39

Yeah. Thank you. And a lot of the people listening to this podcast will be leaders in consulting or leaders in professional services. And so I wanted to ask you a little bit about working with consultants and maybe some trends there. And I'm wondering if whether what you're buying or how you're buying from consulting firms is changing at.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:26:00

So when we work with consultants, typically what we're seeking to buy is experience that we don't have or expertise in a particular area that we don't have. So, you know, we're really careful about when we go out and procure services from consultants because we have lots of talented, capable people. But, but sometimes we need that external viewpoint and we need that external strength. And when I am working with consultants, I'm always looking for those that can quite tailored and bespoke answers that work for our business. They don't just bring a sort of generic solution or something that fitted, you know, the last five companies that they've sold that to. And we have our views, you know, we know what works for our business, we know how our business works. So making sure that that is tailored to us, that works for us is really, really important.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:26:57

So. So the consultants that we choose to work with are those that understand our culture, that understand what we're trying to attain, that help us co create solutions and make sure that what we are then left with at the end of all of that is something that will operate successfully in the business.

Emma Carroll..... 00:27:15

I'm interested. You said that there would need to be a culture, they would understand your culture. Have you ever seen a culture clash? What would that look like?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:27:24

Yeah, so I guess, you know, one of the programs that we ran a few years ago, we worked with a consultant around control development and what ended up being created was a very long list of controls that when you try to apply them pragmatically in the work environment, didn't quite gel with us. And that's because, you know, we have a myriad of systems. People do things in different ways. So, so, you know, trying to implement those things became incredibly difficult for us. And we, I should also say that that was a several years ago. We've, we've had more successful projects since then in a similar vein. But it's about, okay, understanding what is, how do people work in this organization?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:28:16

What time constraints do they have around themselves? What are the things that they're being asked to do and how do you really pinpoint, you know, what is the thing that needs to change and how do you make it not an increased admin burden or something that's going to just suck up time for people in ways they just can't spend and therefore they just ignore it versus something that can quickly become embedded in the day to day ways that people work.

Emma Carroll..... 00:28:41

Okay, thank you. I was really interested that you said that one of the most important things is that a firm would understand your business, would understand your journey, would understand your ways of working, your culture. And that seems a very, a very people related thing, a very relationship related thing. Do you ever think that like AI Gen AI could have that kind of relationship with you from a consulting firm or do you feel it would always be about people? What's your feeling there?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:29:11

I think that there will, there will be a place for Gen AI in terms of giving you a basis of understanding funding. I think it's fantastic at present for assimilating data, giving insights, but I still believe that you will always need the human element on top to really translate that and then understand how it's going to work in your organization. So for me, AI isn't really going to replace people or consultants or lawyers or finance people because at present, and

I don't think he's ever going to get to this, it's not going to be able to exercise judgment in the moment moment, because that's all about relationships, that's all about communication and it's all about how we talk to each other and what is said and what is also not said. So I think the role of consultants can be. They can certainly use those toolings to help just get that basis. But I don't see a day where I'm going to be consulting with a Gen AI tool exclusively, and they won't.

Emma Carroll..... 00:30:13

Be consulting with a Gen AI GC as well. Okay, thank you so much. And we do always like to end the podcast on a really practical takeaway, something that somebody listening can go away and implement. And I'm thinking maybe a GC who's just setting out on their career or one that really wants to progress. What's the one thing you would pull out that can really help them create a great impact in the business they in?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:30:41

So I think for any GC new or aspiring, what's really important is to find ways to be more than just the lawyer in the room. And I think it's really important that you think hard about what is the value that you bring beyond just your legal skills and channel that. And so lawyers have so many skills that can be deployed beyond just the field of legal. I think lawyers ask great questions. I think they can prod and probe people. They can assimilate data extremely quickly. They can often be sort of the neutral person in the room.



Vicki Bradin ..... 00:31:20

And through doing that, I think they can help the teams that they are part of to get to better answers, better decisions. They can challenge, and they can manage conflict very effectively. And I think they also have those skills that they can push into other areas of the business, too. You know, I was saying, saying I had, I did cyber security, I knew nothing about cyber security, but if you deploy the same questioning mindset and probing mindset, you can be effective. So my advice is to. To. To really use those skill sets to branch out and become more than just the legal expert.

Emma Carroll..... 00:31:54

Fantastic. Vicki Braden, thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:31:58

It's been a real pleasure. Thank you for having me.

Emma Carroll..... 00:00:01

Welcome to the Business Leaders Voice podcast. I'm Emma Carroll, head of content here at Source, and today we're going to be discussing moving with pace and particularly the role of the general counsel in building a culture of innovation and of speed. And I'm really delighted to welcome Vicki Braden to the podcast. And Vicki is general counsel and company secretary at Sage. Vicki, big welcome to the podcast.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:00:27

Thank you. Great to be here.

Emma Carroll..... 00:00:29

Can you kick things off by telling us a little bit about yourself, your career, and I'd love to hear a little bit about maybe what drives you as well.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:00:36

Yeah, absolutely. So I am the general counsel and company secretary at Sage, as you said.

Emma Carroll..... 00:00:40

I've.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:00:41

I've been there since 2016 and also a member of the executive leadership team there too. So I have had a fairly traditional path in my legal career. So I started off, as many lawyers do, in private practice. I worked super hard and became a corporate lawyer. And I worked at different sized firms, including Magic Circle firms. And probably about 15 years ago, I decided that that wasn't really what I wanted to do and I went in house. And for my whole career in house, I've been in technology companies.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:01:12

I was in a company called Misys originally, which was a banking software company, and then moved to Sage, which has a lot of similarities, but also quite a lot of differences in terms of the customer base it serves and things like that. But. But yes, always been a sort of technology lawyer for my whole of my in house, in terms of what motivates me and drives me so personally, I've always been somebody who likes to end up in a different place from where I started. So. And I'm also somebody who really enjoys working with others, bringing others on, and working collaboratively in a team. I really thrive in high performance teams and really enjoy that kind of collective success. So in terms of work, I've always been very attracted to opportunities that mean I can take something and make it a little bit better or evolve it in a certain way, put my spin on it, I suppose. And then, you know, I always enjoy working with teams, be it my peer set, leading others, working through others, bringing others on and making them successful.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:02:18

So those are the things that, that motivate me day to day.

Emma Carroll..... 00:02:20

Okay, thank you. I feel we've really got a feel for you now, so thank you. And when we first chatted, I was really surprised about the sort of, the really broad scope of your role. So tell us a little bit about that and maybe if you could throw in what your big goals are as general counsel at the moment, sure.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:02:37

So I've been extremely lucky in my career, particularly at Sage, where I've had the opportunity to really grow my remit. So I started off in 2016 as the GC and obviously had the. The legal team and the company secretarial team. So essentially the governance team underneath me. And then my next foray into wider leadership was I took on cyber security, of which I knew nothing about at the time. So that was. That was a big learning curve.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:02:59

And then I on risk and controls and assurance and then procurement, and then more recently data governance. So very, very fortunate to be able to have a fantastic group of people with different skill sets that work with me. And, you know, one of the things that me and my team have spent a lot of time about thinking about actually, in the last kind of couple of years, is what's the common thread between us, what unites us, because we're all quite different disciplines, we're all different people, different backgrounds, but there's commonality there. And the way that we've talked, what we are there to do and what our ambition is, is around creating trust as a foundation for sustainable growth. So, in short, that's all about how do we bring speed and flexibility for our business without compromising on things like business trust or accountability. And so we focus not just on the what we do, but we also try to focus very much on how we do it and holding the company accountable to the how it does things as well. And so we try to do that in four broad ways. And these are our strategic objectives as a function, as a team.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:04:11

So the first one is around building on the core brand promise of trust. So what that looks like is making sure that our products are secure, that data is protected, and making sure

that all of our stakeholders are served by excellence in those areas. And also things like sustainable procurement, which is becoming a bigger and bigger aspect of procurement, and the way that we buy services. And we're also around enabling the business to go faster. So we use things like governance and risk and assurance to really drive efficient and effective decision making and to really help the business improve and scale and take risks in accordance with the appetite it sets for itself. So to knowingly lean into risks and also to lean out of risks too. We also seek to protect the company's interests, the best interests, with integrity. So that's all about making sure that we don't lose sight of our core values.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:05:06

And we empower and we challenge and we proactively drive change throughout the organization. And then as a function, we also focus very much on our own culture, our own inclusive culture. So we want to build a high performing team that's really built on the principle of inclusivity and bringing diverse voices and thoughts and viewpoints together.

Emma Carroll..... 00:05:30

Okay. And I'd love to pull on one of those threads that you talked about there. You specifically talked about using governance to like drive speed. And I'm really fascinated with that because perhaps unfairly. Tell me what you think. Sometimes general counsels, legal departments, same as with a cfo, they can be thought of the people who would potentially be pointing out all the risks, the people who might be saying, no, the thing, people who might be slowing things down. How do you use governance and your role to actually move things at pace?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:06:01

Yeah, so I think that's a stereotype. I'm not sure it's a fair stereotype. I'm sure the CFOs would say the same thing. And I don't think it's how modern genes VCs really work anymore. Because we have to be the persons who point out the risks and help the business understand the risks it's taking. But we also have to be part of the solution to those risks and find ways through and help the company and our colleagues navigate through risk and ambiguity. And so, you know, I'm a big fan of, of saying that yes, there's some risks that we want to avoid, but there's also some risks that we want to lean actively into.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:06:35

And so it's very much about facing into those and understanding what that means. And so the way that we use things like governance, we spend a lot of time over the last couple of years focusing the business on its risk appetite. So in respect of the sort of key risks that we see in our business, what are those that we want to mitigate and move away from and manage downwards, and where are those areas that we really, really want to lean into and take more risk? And moreover, what does that look like? So it's very easy to say you want to take more risk, but actually that can sometimes feel quite hard for businesses to take more risk. And it's about taking sensible risks and kind of fully understood risks. So one of the analogies we gave, we gave a talk to some of the executive leadership team a couple of years ago, and we use the analogy of a very expensive sports car that has brake calipers, which I'm, I'm reliably informed the brighter the brake caliber, the more expensive it tends to be. So the ones you want are the sort of bright red ones, but you know, that's that we use that analogy because we are trying to convey the fact that, you know, expensive sports cars show off their brake protections because, you know, you can go faster if you've got the things that will protect you from the worst happening.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:07:52

And so that's how we very much see our role. How do we help the business through governance, through risk appetite, through assessing what could go wrong or what we might want to do more of to really move at pace.

Emma Carroll..... 00:08:02

Okay, really interesting, thank you. And you've talked quite a bit about culture as well, which is really interesting. And some of those things you've talked about there, some of these controls, I guess, are part of culture. They do feed into culture. But is there anything else you would pull out that really creates a culture that can move fast?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:08:20

Yeah, I think in terms of understanding, in terms of things like decision making, it's about a lot of, for me, it's a lot about empowerment. So really spending time upfront thinking about what is the outcome that is trying to be achieved, what is the direction of travel that we are trying to go in, what is the end goal that we are trying to reach, and then being really clear on how long that we think that's going to take, and then putting in place the structure that enables the teams to get on with it, to move at pace, to make

the progress, but regularly assessing where we are in that and being ruthlessly transparent about how far we've achieved our goals and where things aren't working. And part of my job is to set that tone with my team, let them do the work, let them get on with it, empower them to do that. But I check in regularly and help them understand whether there's blocks in the way or there's things that are slowing us down so that we can remove those and kind of move faster.

Emma Carroll..... 00:09:19

Okay, and I'm just going to parachute back up a moment, and I'm wondering about the. This whole podcast really is about speed, is about delivering at pace. Why is that so important for Sage specifically, would you say?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:09:31

So we are a tech company and technology is moving incredibly fast at the moment. And so as a tech company, we have to stay ahead of the technology trends that are going on in the world. You know, Sage, as an organization, many years ago, missed a technology trend. So it wasn't one of the first companies to go into the cloud. And this was prior to my time and the current leadership time, but it paid a heavy price for that in terms of having to then play a lot of catch up. And I'VE been part of the team that's kind of led that and we're where we want to be now, but it's been hard yards getting there. So, you know, with things like Generative AI, we've been very determined to be ahead of that particular curve and to make sure that our products are first to market, that we're leading the charge because you set the tone and competitors follow you.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:10:22

So staying ahead of those trends, making sure that we are in the pack and we are leading that pack, is a critically important part. And you have to move fast. You have to move fast. You know, things are developing so quickly with things like AI that if you aren't out there talking about your product, launching your product, testing it with customers, others are already there.

Emma Carroll..... 00:10:41

Yeah. And how do you decide if something is the real thing or is a fad or do you just have to go for it anyway and see where you get to? Yeah.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:10:50

So I think, you know, if you think about it in terms of the technology that we release, we were pretty definitive that Generative AI was. I don't think it's a fad. I don't think it's going anywhere. And you know, as you say, as a business, we've used AI and machine learning capabilities for years. Those aren't brand new to us. Gen AI is a bit new, but AI and ML are not new to us. So we've been working, looking at those and you know, we think less about what is the technology.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:11:17

So it's very easy to get seduced by the idea of doing things that are super wizzy, but they've got to have a practical application. So the thing that we've thought really hard and long about when we've been looking at our technology and Gen AI in particular, is it's got to have a purpose that our customers will recognize. So we focused a lot on use cases, we focused a lot on how do we eliminate repetitive tasks, how does it become a sort of assistant for our customers to help them with their own productivity, with their own pace. And so those kind of technologies I think are here to stay and have always been here to stay. So it's really thinking about what is the technology there to solve and what pain points is it there to relieve in our customers. And I think that's where we've, that's what's always been guiding us.

Emma Carroll..... 00:12:02

Okay, and is there a genai that you're most excited about that you're using at the moment?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:12:08

So as a, as an organization, we obviously have our own gen AI assistance called Sage Copilot, which we've launched and we are actively testing that with customers now and getting some really good feedback about how it's helping customers with their day to day challenges and taking some of the administrative burden off them. So I'm really excited about what that can do because our customers have a very long list of things they would like us to take off their plate. And then internally with my team, again, we've been using AI in different ways for a long time. So things like our CyberSecurity team use AI to monitor cyber risk that can do that far quicker, far more accurately than any human being. And one of the things that me and my team were talking about recently is we often look at risks from different angles. For example, so if we're buying a new service or we're releasing a product that can go through many of the hands of different parts of my

team, be it cyber, be it legal, be it data, and we think there's probably a way that we can pull together use using data and analytics and AI to really understand more deeply our kind of risk assessments, our individual risk assessments collectively. And does that mean that actually we have the confidence to move forward in areas or are there areas where, you know, we might want to take a step back and how can we augment that with external information about breaches or about legal risk etc, to really ensure that we are taking very rounded business decision?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:13:32

So that's an application that, you know, we're thinking about how we can use it in the future.

Emma Carroll..... 00:13:37

Yeah. A lot of the things you're talking to me about and that are about pace, seems to me you're really big on collaboration. Yeah. Any tips on really making collaboration work? You've got such a diverse team doing so many different things.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:13:51

Yeah, I'd say that communication is pretty central to that. And again, myself, my team were talking about this just the other day, bringing ourselves together regularly and talking about where there are shared challenges, where there are different opinions about how we may want to do things. So all of my team will approach things from different angles and they'll often, not always, but they'll often primarily be focused on the problem they're trying to solve or the need they have. And so how do we make sure that we continue to talk to each other so that we're not duplicating, so we're not making things more difficult for our colleagues than they need to be. We're not doubling up our questions, we're not asking the same questions twice. And then how do we really sit down and quite, in a quite disciplined way and kind of red line those things or red pen those things which are not making our colleagues experience better and therefore slowing us down because people aren't engaging in our processes necessarily or we're not getting the information that we need. So thinking always from the standpoint of like, how do we get our colleagues to engage with this, how do we make sure that our processes and our workflows are as intuitive as possible and are as simple as possible, while still making sure that we all get the data we need and then we share that collectively.



Vicki Bradin ..... 00:15:14

For me, that's all about communication and just constantly talking about these things because otherwise we tend to, we run the risk of going off into silos and solving our own problems.

Emma Carroll..... 00:15:24

Yes, yep, that all makes really good sense. And I'm wondering, we've obviously we've talked about a lot about going at pace, but are there any times where you just have to go slowly?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:15:35

Yes. I mean, it sounds really obvious to say it, but there are some problems that you just cannot solve overnight. And I think one of the, one of the challenges of my role is that I tend to look after areas where compliance or cyber security or data protection, where if there are areas that we want to improve, people tend to be quite anxious about that. They want improvements to happen very quickly because they're areas of risk and there's a lot of potential exposure in that. So my job is to help the business understand where sometimes moving quickly will solve a surface problem or give an inch deep solution. And actually the bigger solution, the better solution, the more long term solution, is to do a more programmatic, slightly longer term program of change. And so you know, the examples where we've seen that in particular in areas like cyber security, where we're obviously constantly keeping our products up to date and secure, but that we've gone through a period of time where we had programs that have taken a year to do, or two years to do or three years to do, to do them in the way that we want to, because they're not just about technical change, they're often about culture change too.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:16:42

And I think the key on those kind of programs is that just you have to resist this temptation of just saying, well, that's going to take a very long time. And the risk is that it gets sort of kicked into the long grass. So to avoid that, what, what we tend to do is that we are very deliberate about where are we trying to get to and make that as measurable as possible. And then we Set out a time frame. And they're often very ambitious time frames, but we set out time frame for ourselves and then we measure that every month and we meet every month. We share it with executive leadership team and our board every month. And we hold ourselves to account on it. And if we.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:17:21

And we're ruthlessly transparent. So those things just help give comfort, I think, where pieces of work can take a longer time, that, that they are moving and that things are happening.

Emma Carroll..... 00:17:33

And Sage is a large, established footsie business. How do you keep ahead and maybe pull in some learnings throughout your career on this one?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:17:43

Yeah, sure.

Emma Carroll..... 00:17:43

How to big businesses like that keep ahead of their, like smaller, more agile competitors?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:17:48

So I think the key, the first thing is you must never be complacent or arrogant. And sometimes I have seen that in my career where big competitors feel that smaller competitors, sure, they serve a niche, but they're tiny, that we're well ahead of them. They'll never catch us up. So having respect for your competitors, studying your competitors, not just those that are immediately side by side, but also with you, but also those that are in the rear view mirror because those smaller companies can get bigger and they can move very, very quickly. So being really humble, I think in that and, and really studying your competition, listening to your customers is another thing that we have found. And that means that's the good and the bad, right? It's easy to gravitate to the good stuff, but it's also about the bad and doing something about it.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:18:34

How are you changing the pain points that your products, for example, can create for customers? So we do a lot of that. I'd say from an organizational perspective, the other things that we've spent time thinking about is our shape. So I think there is a tendency

maybe when companies get bigger that they have to bring in more people. They can bloat a little. And so spans and layers and management layers can really slow you down. And when you add in more people, it doesn't necessarily make you more productive. So you've got to think very carefully about the shape of your team, about your spans and your layers, so that decision making and communication isn't getting slow.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:19:15

And then I think the other thing that we've spent time thinking about is what do you centralize and then what do you keep close to the ground, close to the action. So my personal view is that teams like mine and finance and people teams, they benefit from having a sort of centralized, guiding mind, I guess, at the center, because I think that makes them more efficient. I think that can make them more effective. Whereas if you've got competitive insight teams, they need to be close to the sales teams because they need to be able to respond, they need to take information on board and then they need to help their sales teams and the product teams to respond to change. So it's just as you, as you grow as an organization and as you seek to stay ahead, I think these are the things that. That we found we do.

Emma Carroll..... 00:19:57

Okay, Interesting. And you talk there about fast decision making and some of the research that we're doing here at the source. We always look at business confidence and what's making businesses feel confident or unconfident. And in the current market, with so many things unknowable at the moment, one of the big things that we're told is making teams lack confidence is they don't feel their leadership teams are able to make quick decisions decisions. Is that something you've come across in your career?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:20:27

I would say that I have experienced that in my career. So the example I was giving earlier on where, you know, there was a just not responding quickly to a new technology and having seen the consequences of that, of just, I guess a doubling down on the direction of travel at that point in time and not really keeping open eyes and ears to what was happening, caused us at SAGE to lose time, to lose market share. And again, turning that around and moving the company in a different direction towards that new technology is something that we've done successfully, but it has taken us a lot of time. And so responding to that change was something that, at that point in time, I think it was

not done successfully. So I've certainly felt the consequences of that and how hard it can be to kind of recover.

Emma Carroll..... 00:21:27

Yeah, interesting. And obviously sitting on that top team and observing ones that you have done in the past as well, what would be your tips for people externally to help top teams make really robust but quick, fast decisions?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:21:42

So I think first and foremost, it's always about being really clear about what is the problem that you're trying to solve. So you'd be surprised. Sometimes it's not always clear what the problem is that people are trying to solve and breaking those problems down. You know, leadership teams don't tend to focus on small problems. They tend to focus on quite big sticky issues. So, you know, what is it that you're trying to resolve? Are you looking at the symptom of a problem or are you actually looking at the underlying issue?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:22:06

And if there's a fast time solution or and there's a slower Time solution, like how do you separate those two things out? So breaking a problem down. I think also getting the data that you need or at least getting the best data that you can is really important. I think you've also got to try and avoid being too subjective or giving opinion and let the data do the talking. What's really important as well is I think, listening to people who know what they're talking about and those may not be the people at the top table because they're not necessarily the ones in the trenches day to day and seeing things. So seeking those and being humble and listening to those views as well. But I think what's also important is that don't drive for consensus. Consensus may not always be available.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:22:52

So we talk about, disagree and commit. So can we get to a point where we can live with a decision even if we don't all agree with it? But what's really, really important is that we all get behind that decision and then being really clear on what the decision is made. So again, sometimes when you think you've made a decision, one of the best things to do is go around the room and ask everybody what they think has been decided and see if that's all the same. Surprisingly, it's not always the same because people hear things

differently, but being really, really clear about what the decision is that's been taken and then really communicating that decision. So I think sometimes in leadership teams, because an issue has been talked about a lot, you think we've done this, we know it, there's nothing to say anymore. But for team members and other parts of the organization, it might be the first time they're hearing something. So keep communicating it.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:23:44

Have that absolute clarity of the communication. And then I think post a decision, it's all about how do you empower others to execute and not get in the way. But as a leadership team, your job is to check back in and assess how things are going. So when my boss, Steve Hare, often talks about being a manager in that sense, you let the players play on the pitch, you don't get on the pitch with the players. And then at the half time or at the end of the time, you, you ruthlessly dissect how the performance was. But you've got to be really clear where your boundary is and where other colleagues need to step in and perform.

Emma Carroll..... 00:24:19

And you don't be one of those angry parents swearing on the no, no, no, don't do.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:24:23

Try to avoid that.

Emma Carroll..... 00:24:26

Fantastic. And I thought that was really interesting when you were talking about how you might not all agree. You have to get to that point. Well, you get to an agreement even though you don't want to agree. Any tips on that? How does that look in practice?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:24:38

It's. It's often about focusing less on individual views or egos or I guess the desire to have your decision be the decision that's taken and putting all of that ego to one side and just asking ourselves, what is the problem that we need to solve right now? What is what. What is the perspective of from a customer or from a colleague? And, and trying to center that decision away from just the individuals in the room. And so I think when

you approach problems like that and people have their views heard, people get to say their piece. It's not, you know, it's a respectful environment.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:25:18

But at the end of the day, we are there to solve customer problems and we're there to help our colleagues be successful. And if you can neutralize some of that, it just focuses people on the outcomes more. I think so. And we are pretty successful at that. It's not always easy though. It's not always easy, but that is the only way sometimes you can make decisions quickly.

Emma Carroll..... 00:25:39

Yeah. Thank you. And a lot of the people listening to this podcast will be leaders in consulting or leaders in professional services. And so I wanted to ask you a little bit about working with consultants and maybe some trends there. And I'm wondering if whether what you're buying or how you're buying from consulting firms is changing at.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:26:00

So when we work with consultants, typically what we're seeking to buy is experience that we don't have or expertise in a particular area that we don't have. So, you know, we're really careful about when we go out and procure services from consultants because we have lots of talented, capable people. But, but sometimes we need that external viewpoint and we need that external strength. And when I am working with consultants, I'm always looking for those that can quite tailored and bespoke answers that work for our business. They don't just bring a sort of generic solution or something that fitted, you know, the last five companies that they've sold that to. And we have our views, you know, we know what works for our business, we know how our business works. So making sure that that is tailored to us, that works for us is really, really important.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:26:57

So. So the consultants that we choose to work with are those that understand our culture, that understand what we're trying to attain, that help us co create solutions and make sure that what we are then left with at the end of all of that is something that will operate successfully in the business.

Emma Carroll..... 00:27:15

I'm interested. You said that there would need to be a culture, they would understand your culture. Have you ever seen a culture clash? What would that look like?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:27:24

Yeah, so I guess, you know, one of the programs that we ran a few years ago, we worked with a consultant around control development and what ended up being created was a very long list of controls that when you try to apply them pragmatically in the work environment, didn't quite gel with us. And that's because, you know, we have a myriad of systems. People do things in different ways. So, so, you know, trying to implement those things became incredibly difficult for us. And we, I should also say that that was a several years ago. We've, we've had more successful projects since then in a similar vein. But it's about, okay, understanding what is, how do people work in this organization?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:28:16

What time constraints do they have around themselves? What are the things that they're being asked to do and how do you really pinpoint, you know, what is the thing that needs to change and how do you make it not an increased admin burden or something that's going to just suck up time for people in ways they just can't spend and therefore they just ignore it versus something that can quickly become embedded in the day to day ways that people work.

Emma Carroll..... 00:28:41

Okay, thank you. I was really interested that you said that one of the most important things is that a firm would understand your business, would understand your journey, would understand your ways of working, your culture. And that seems a very, a very people related thing, a very relationship related thing. Do you ever think that like AI Gen AI could have that kind of relationship with you from a consulting firm or do you feel it would always be about people? What's your feeling there?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:29:11

I think that there will, there will be a place for Gen AI in terms of giving you a basis of understanding funding. I think it's fantastic at present for assimilating data, giving insights, but I still believe that you will always need the human element on top to really

translate that and then understand how it's going to work in your organization. So for me, AI isn't really going to replace people or consultants or lawyers or finance people because at present, and I don't think he's ever going to get to this, it's not going to be able to exercise judgment in the moment moment, because that's all about relationships, that's all about communication and it's all about how we talk to each other and what is said and what is also not said. So I think the role of consultants can be. They can certainly use those toolings to help just get that basis. But I don't see a day where I'm going to be consulting with a Gen AI tool exclusively, and they won't.

Emma Carroll..... 00:30:13

Be consulting with a Gen AI GC as well. Okay, thank you so much. And we do always like to end the podcast on a really practical takeaway, something that somebody listening can go away and implement. And I'm thinking maybe a GC who's just setting out on their career or one that really wants to progress. What's the one thing you would pull out that can really help them create a great impact in the business they in?

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:30:41

So I think for any GC new or aspiring, what's really important is to find ways to be more than just the lawyer in the room. And I think it's really important that you think hard about what is the value that you bring beyond just your legal skills and channel that. And so lawyers have so many skills that can be deployed beyond just the field of legal. I think lawyers ask great questions. I think they can prod and probe people. They can assimilate data extremely quickly. They can often be sort of the neutral person in the room.

Vicki Bradin ..... 00:31:20

And through doing that, I think they can help the teams that they are part of to get to better answers, better decisions. They can challenge, and they can manage conflict very effectively. And I think they also have those skills that they can push into other areas of the business, too. You know, I was saying, saying I had, I did cyber security, I knew nothing about cyber security, but if you deploy the same questioning mindset and probing mindset, you can be effective. So my advice is to. To. To really use those skill sets to branch out and become more than just the legal expert.

Emma Carroll..... 00:31:54



Fantastic. Vicki Braden, thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it.

Vicki Braden ..... 00:31:58

It's been a real pleasure. Thank you for having me.