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Commitment to the Mission

Interviews and Profiles





Carol DiBattiste

GENERAL COUNSEL, CHIEF COMPLIANCE, PRIVACY, & PEOPLE OFFICER

COMSCORE

RESTON, VIRGINIA, USA

There are three things that motivate Carol DiBattiste: challenges, people, and the mission. She found all three when she joined comScore, the media measurement and analytics company based in Reston, Virginia, in January 2017. Her love of that triumvirate has led her to be described as a “turnaround leader,” but she insists she never planned on it. It is just something she finds naturally exciting — and she keeps getting asked to do it.

As general counsel and chief compliance, privacy, and people officer (and corporate secretary), DiBattiste devoted the first six months of her tenure to understanding the business and its team — and the challenges they faced. Two and a half years ago, a comScore internal investigation uncovered faulty accounting practices. The resulting chaos led to the departure of several top leaders and a board realignment, along with plenty of litigation and a delisting on Nasdaq.

The new executive team includes Bryan Weiner, who joined the board in 2017 and officially became CEO in May 2018. “He really embodies our values of integrity, accountability, teamwork, and he added two: servant leadership and velocity,” DiBattiste says. Servant leadership means that the leaders empower every single employee to contribute ideas, be accountable, and win. And velocity means achievement over activity, moving fast, and implementing ideas quickly.

“People, in my opinion, are the most important part of any organization,” DiBattiste emphasizes. She supervises three deputy GCs whose responsibilities are divided into contract management, privacy, and compliance; financial reporting, corporate governance, and securities; and complex transactions and agreements, intellectual property, and M&A. There are 24 people in the legal department, and they have been extremely busy this year with the restatement and relisting and resolving all related litigation. Furthermore, they have implemented General Data Protection Regulation compliance and an entire compliance management system, a new contract management system, and have done exceptional work on numerous agreements with comScore’s clients and partners, among other major projects. DiBattiste describes their performance as “phenomenal.”

The third motivator for DiBattiste is the mission. comScore’s mission, simply put, is to bring trust and transparency to media, empowering partners to use its data to drive business growth. comScore has customers all over the world who rely on it to be a neutral barometer of their reach. Its clients range across the advertising ecosystem: publishers, TV networks and stations, agencies, and brands, as well as movie studios, distributors, and exhibitors.

When DiBattiste was building her team, among questions she asked potential candidates were “What’s the greatest challenge you’ve faced, and how did you overcome it?” The questions provide a window into a potential employee’s problem-solving skills and psyche. A person’s ability to manage pressure and challenges is key, she says.

Her team has weathered the storm and are now concentrating on forward-looking projects like the Campaign Ratings Tool. The tool is the company’s newest cross-platform measurement solution. Multiple major media companies have joined as partners. It will give them trusted, unduplicated measurements of video ad campaigns across linear TV, desktop, over-the-top (Netflix and Hulu, for example), and mobile platforms.

Aim high, soar

Growing up, DiBattiste didn’t have an inkling she would practice law. She lost her father to lymphoma when she was nine years old. Her mother, who she describes as her “hero,” raised her and her two siblings. Raised in Philadelphia, she went to Abraham Lincoln, one of the largest schools in the city, where she was a straight-A student. After high school, DiBattiste decided she wanted to join the Air Force. The mission of serving her country really appealed to her. And the tuition assistance meant she wouldn’t burden her mother with college payments.

“Joining the Air Force was the best thing I ever did,” DiBattiste confidently states. She was initially working in accounting and finance while she was stationed in Hawaii. Then an uninsured motorist hit her car, causing damage. She decided to represent herself in small claims court. DiBattiste won the case, even going against counsel. “That was when I was 19 years old, and I thought I think I can do this,” she remembers.

After she completed her undergraduate degree through the tuition assistance program, DiBattiste was commissioned as an officer and was a distinguished graduate at the Officer’s Training School. After a recruiting assignment, where she was the operations officer for a recruiting squadron in Pennsylvania, DiBattiste was competitively selected by the Air Force to attend law school full-time, which was paid for by the Air Force. Once she completed law school, she immediately became part of the JAG Corps. DiBattiste eventually became the chief prosecutor for the Air Force in the Pacific, trying numerous cases on bases in Guam, South Korea, Japan, Okinawa, and the Philippines. Later, the Air Force sent her back to law school to obtain a Master of Laws degree (and paid for it).

DiBattiste also taught at the JAG school for three years and became the head of JAG recruiting before she retired after 20 years of service.

DiBattiste says that the Air Force experience is a defining event in her life.

When she became a civilian, DiBattiste was hired by the Southern District of Florida where she prosecuted predominantly drug and gun cases in Miami. “It was a great experience because there were so many cases and different types of offenses to prosecute,” DiBattiste remembers.

From there, things skyrocketed. DiBattiste was moved up to the headquarters of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC, where she ran the Office of Legal Education for the Executive Branch. She moved on to become the principal deputy general counsel of the Navy. She investigated Tailhook, supervised NCIS, and was the Navy’s suspension and debarment official, among her other duties. From 1994 to 1997, she was the director of the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, responsible for 94 United States Attorneys’ Offices. During her tenure, she worked with the Department of Justice and the United States Attorneys’ Offices on the Oklahoma City Bombing, Atlanta Olympic Park Bombing, and TWA 800 investigations. “As I think back to all my positions, this is the one with the greatest impact, vital mission, and it was done with a close team, many of whom I am still in contact with today,” DiBattiste recalls.

Ten years after she retired from Air Force active duty, DiBattiste was unanimously confirmed by the US Senate as the Honorable Undersecretary of the Air Force, the number two civilian position in the Air Force. In that role, the biggest honor of her life, she asked for her father’s military records from World War II. The records showed that he was in Nagasaki after the bomb went off, working as a welder for the US Marine Corps. Learning this added some closure for her family because they could finally understand how he became ill at such a young age.

DiBattiste’s government career temporarily ended when she was recruited as a partner to Holland & Knight. She rejoined the government after 9/11 to help establish the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), which she maintains is the hardest position she’s ever had. TSA was the first new federal agency since World War II, with a very critical mission, she notes.

Her first challenging public company job was with Choicepoint, which inadvertently shared customer data with criminals pretending to be clients and faced US$10 million in civil penalties and five million dollars to consumers for redress, as well as numerous lawsuits. Within a year and a half, the company had revised its privacy and compliance practices and served as a privacy model for other companies.

DiBattiste doesn’t distinguish between the government and in-house work for companies, whether public or in the startup stage. It’s the challenge, people, and mission. She reflects: “There’s an attraction for me because I like to solve challenges, and I love people. The people are important because that’s who fulfills the mission and addresses the challenges.”

There’s no telling where her mission might take her next.

Getting to know… Carol DiBattiste

IF YOU WANTED TO HAVE A DRINK OR MEAL WITH ANYONE — LIVING OR DEAD — WHO WOULD YOU INVITE?

I just saw Hamilton this weekend. It would be Hamilton, Jefferson, Adams, Madison, or Washington. I'd love to talk to our founders about the creation of the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights and how and why they constructed the three branches of government. It's really unbelievable when you think about our history, and what a fantastic job they did. I would love to have a conversation with any of them.

And then in business, I would love to have conversations with CEOs. Ken Langone (the founder of Home Depot) is one of my favorites. He was on the ChoicePoint board and helped me in my career. I would love to talk to other CEOs and board directors who run some of the biggest companies today.

WHEN YOU'RE NOT WORKING, WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE THING TO DO?

When I do have free time, I love spending time with family and friends. I also like running, exercising, and reading. I like reading biographies and autobiographies. While I do like running, I can't run as far nor as fast as I once did, but I still love it. It helps me think clearly and stay fit.

One of the key things I like doing is helping others, mentoring others, and motivating others. It's important. It's the future. I have people from all the places I've been who ask me to be a reference, and I love doing it. One of the things I learned early on in my career is making sure others get the same opportunities or even more than I did. It's most fulfilling and one of the best things I can do as a leader. That has stuck with me, and I do it all the time because it was done for me. I want to help others. I want to make sure that my employees and those who have worked with me in the past grow and have very challenging, rewarding, and exciting careers.

Joshua H. Shields



Editor In Chief