

## Inspirational Legal Women Podcast Series

Episode 4

Lucie Allen

4 April 2025



**Sara Carnegie (SC):** Welcome to Lucy Allen, who is the Managing Director at BARBRI, a global leader in legal education, leading provider of the US bar preparation and the SQE process, which helps over 1.4 million learners worldwide to pass the bar.

So, Lucy, hi. It's great to speak with you today and I'm delighted that you're taking part in our Inspirational Legal Women podcast series, where we're looking to celebrate some of our incredible members and their achievements and career in the legal profession.

By way of very quick introduction, you're not a lawyer, but you help many people to become lawyers, and I know that you're a good friend of the IBA, attending our conferences and engaging in our capacity building and training efforts. But we're here today to talk about what you've done, and I know, for the sake of disclosure, that we've recently worked together on #Menopause Matters. So, I want you to tell us a little bit more about that and some of the challenges and experiences that you've had in your career and any advice you might have for those entering a career in law.

So welcome, it's great to have you with us Lucy.

**Lucie Allen (LA):** Thank you, it's great to be here.

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**SC:** So, perhaps we can start with your career path and how you've ended up at BARBRI and what interests you about working with the legal profession.

**LA:** Absolutely. So, as you say, I'm not a lawyer, but I've worked in the legal space for quite some time now. After university, I kind of fell into a job in London that I thought I'd be in for a couple of months and ended up staying there for about 13 years. And that enabled me to really build experience in the commercial space and working particularly with clients, which I really enjoyed. I did dip my toe a little bit in the legal space there; so, it was a hosting business, worked a lot with trademarks and IP lawyers at the time. But after leaving there, I tried a couple of other things before landing at Thomson Reuters and that's when I really started to work exclusively in the legal profession. So, working with a number of law firms and also corporations who took Thomson Reuters products and thinking about how we could better partner with them essentially.

Over time, I moved across different roles and my last role there was building and supporting the global large law firm business units which was working as it sounds with global large law firms where I continued to build my network and work across the industry and really, really enjoyed what I think is a fascinating space. I had the opportunity about three years ago make the move across to BARBRI and, as you said in the intro, we're a legal educator. So, it's extending the experience, I suppose, I've had in the legal profession into education, which I find incredibly satisfying and again, really, really interesting. I mean, my personal passion in it is the opportunity for us to continue to kind of democratise access to the law and to the profession and to help people into that space should that be their chosen career. So yeah, a bit of a kind of weaving pathway but have been working, as I say, in the legal space for about 20 years now.

**SC:** Fantastic. I like that concept of democratising access to a legal career. I think that's really important. I know they've been doing a lot on that, certainly in England and Wales in recent years, looking at social mobility and access to training contracts and pupillages, for example. So, you know, I think it's so important to see that continue notwithstanding some of the threats perhaps to DEI, which we are seeing.

In terms of your ability to juggle what must be an incredibly busy time – being Managing Director of a large organisation like BARBRI – how do you balance the demands of that high pressure career with your personal and family responsibilities? And is there anything that you've been able to do which has been particularly helpful in doing that?

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**LA:** It's a good question, and I think it's really hard and a constant work in progress, if I'm honest. I struggle with being present sometimes. I think when you've got a lot of things going on, it can be difficult to be present in the moment. So that's something I keep practising, and I know I need to get better at. But I do try to prioritise my mental health and certainly my physical health. I think those are two things that I try not to let slip. So, you know, I enjoy exercise that makes me feel mentally stronger as well. I like to try and fit that into my daily routine where possible. So, I think that's a really important thing for me.

It's also having a strong support system. My partner does a lot of the childcare and is at home much more than I am. It enables me to travel with work and not perhaps worry about that so much as other people have to. So, I think that's enabled me to really grow in my career as well.

I do try to model, I suppose, the behaviour that I think other people would welcome. So, I do you try to, you know, disconnect if I'm on holiday; that's not always easy. Sometimes I do slip into it, or I send emails when I shouldn't, but I do and model that behaviour because I do think the juggle is real and I think people need to have that opportunity to recognise that they should take the time to work on the balance that's right for them.

So, as I say, the things I'm kind of working on are the being present and setting some boundaries, but for me, it's the exercise and the support system that I think helps me balance it.

**SC:** Yeah, no, I would second that without any hesitation.

What's been your biggest challenge then that you've faced, if it's something you're willing to share with us, and how did you navigate it?

**LA:** I think, probably, it would be not necessarily my biggest challenge but perhaps a continuation of that theme of balance because that's such an ongoing – struggle is perhaps the wrong word – but it's an ongoing consideration. I mean, if I think about my career, and I'm sure reflective of other people's careers as well, you know, you start off in your early career, you're trying to work out who you are, where you want to be, where you fit, where you belong. And then my journey is I then had a baby, had two babies, and you go through that process, and just as you kind of think that you found who you are, you're then out of the workplace, and that's a worrying time. You think, am I going to be out of sight, out of mind? How's that going to work in practice? You then come back into the workforce. You're growing again in your career, again trying to find that balance, continuing that theme of, well, now I've got caring responsibilities, family responsibilities, job responsibilities, I'm still ambitious, I want to grow. How am I going to prioritise all of that, I suppose? And then just linking it back to your intro as well, Sarah, about the work that we've done on #Menopause Matters. And then suddenly like, wow, you're hit

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with, you're it with menopause, you're with your perimenopause journey. And that can be out of the blue.

So I suppose it's like this, it's an ongoing challenge and overcoming it perhaps isn't necessarily the way I think about it, but it's just that work in progress and it's that kind of constant review of 'how am I turning up every day' or 'what have I got to face every day and what's the best way for me to try and handle some of this that's coming my way'. I think more recently kind of with menopause experience, or perimenopause experience in my position, it's then thinking about how that affects confidence and thinking about unexpected challenges that come my way as well. And it's been great working on the #Menopause Matters initiative because, in talking about that and in finding people that are able to talk and share and be vulnerable and open, it really helps, well, it's helped me certainly and I know it's helps others feel stronger through that process as well.

**SC:** Yeah, I would agree and I mean, you and I did a webinar, didn't we, last year with Law Care, which was a really good experience alongside another one of our #Menopause Matters friends, Sylvia. And I think the value in that and also the interesting aspect to it was just seeing how many people, particularly from other countries, don't talk about this and for whom this subject is still very much taboo. I raised it myself in a conference that I attended in Vienna, and we had judges there, female judges, some of whom said, 'absolutely not, we do not talk about this'. And countries like Austria and one or two others where this was not seen as a topic even that was desirable amongst some women, which I find interesting from a generational perspective because I don't think that was mirrored by the younger colleague from the same country who felt quite differently.

So, we're seeing generational, cultural shifts all round. But no, I really valued you beginning that work. I think it's such an important topic that the legal profession, as well as all professions, then needs to be focused on and how can the IBA do something about it will continue to be in our minds as we move forward this year.

So, Lucy, I don't know whether you have worked in what I would call classic legal environments, which are very male dominated; I don't know if Thomson Reuters or BARBRI fall into that same category or not. But if you've been in male-dominated environments or in a particular role, has this ever been an issue for you or have you found there are certain strategies that you can use to gain that trust? Or does it perhaps make no difference at all? I mean, that question presupposes that there's an issue, but I'm interested to know if you have got any thoughts on that.

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**LA:** Yeah, I have it again, you know, great question. I think latterly in education, it's typically more women than men actually. And I find that at BARBRI, that that's probably the gender split. Thomson Reuters is also pretty balanced, but certainly my career in spaces I worked in prior to that were heavily male dominated. And it's a really interesting thing to consider because do you try to emulate what might be typical male characteristics or qualities to try and compete? And I think if I think back to my earlier career, I probably did, whether it was conscious or not, I think that's something I thought that I had to lean into in order to be successful.

But I actually think when I reflect on what's made me successful or what's helped me in my career, it's that leaning more into the empathy and the communication and the qualities that might be seen as softer, but I think are increasingly important, particularly in kind of today's environment. So, you know, I've tried to work hard, I've tried to bring others along with me on the journey as well. And in that, I think over time, although not in the beginning, you know find my confidence, not be afraid to be outspoken about being ambitious, but also really, as I say, leaning on those things that I think are at my core as well, the kind of empathy and the communication and the caring aspects as well.

I mean, I do think in a male-dominated environment what's also helped me or what did help me in my earlier career certainly is building a network and finding your supporters. And those supporters actually were men in the main. They're still men now, I call my supporters, but I think that they definitely helped me, you know, pulled me along, spoke about me in rooms when I wasn't there, championed me and that was hugely important too.

**SC:** Yeah, I think I totally recognise that, absolutely. And you clearly have managed to establish credibility because I know that you are shortlisted for an award. You are shortlisted for Woman of the Year, Lucy, which I sincerely hope you win in the Women and Diversity in Law Awards. So clearly, you've been doing something very well, or a number of things perhaps.

So, I think just to wrap up the last thing that I'm asking our guests, our inspirational legal women, is what's the best piece of advice you could give to someone who's aspiring to succeed in law, in a career in law particularly being a woman.

**LA:** I think advocate for yourself, kind of own the space that you're in, which can sometimes be challenging. We've touched on some of those points in this discussion here. It's really important to build your network, to find the people that will support you. And then as you're climbing the ladder, I think it's also equally important to think about how you lift others, so how you left others along with you as you reaching new successes and new heights too.

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**SC:** Wonderful. Well, thank you so much for your time today. It's been an absolute pleasure to speak with you and wishing you all the best.

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