



Lowenstein Sandler's Women's Initiative Network Podcast: Real Talk

Episode 56

[Megan Monson](#), [Diane Moss](#), [Maria Prince](#)

JULY 2026

Rachel Dikovics: Welcome to the Lowenstein Sandler podcast series, the *Women's Initiative Network: Real Talk*. I'm Rachel Dikovics, counsel in Lowenstein's White Collar Defense Practice Group and a member of the Women's Initiative Network at Lowenstein Sandler. Before we begin, please take a moment to subscribe to our podcast series at Lowenstein.com/podcast, or find us on iTunes, Spotify, Pandora, or SoundCloud. Now let's take a listen.

Megan Monson: Welcome to the Women's Initiative Network Real Talk. I'm one of your hosts, Megan Monson, partner in Lowenstein Sandler's Executive Compensation, Employment & Benefits practice group.

Diane Moss: Thank you, Megan. Joining you, Diane Moss, counsel in Lowenstein's IP Commercial Transactions group. Pleasure to co-host with you today and looking forward to our conversation with Maria Prince. And to that end, on today's episode of Real Talk, we're extremely fortunate to be joined by Maria Prince, who holds an MBA and is certified by the National Association of Corporate Directors. Maria is a board member and senior executive advisor, most recently serving as global head of ESG and supply chain risk at DuPont. She serves on the advisory board for Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business Executive Education, as well as serves on the board of the Business Consortium Fund. We've asked Maria to join us today to share some insight into her career path and to share her wisdom with our listeners, in particular, those who are interested in pursuing positions on a board of directors. Maria, thank you for joining us today.

Maria Prince: Well, thank you both for having me. This is exactly the type of room I love being in, talking to other women about how we can help each other, so thank you for having me.

Diane Moss: Our pleasure. So, I think we should just start with the basics. We'd love to hear about your career journey for context. Do you mind sharing a bit about it, your path?

Maria Prince:

No, I don't. I started my career at PepsiCo 25-plus years ago, thinking that would be the one chapter in my life, that I'd work there forever, like most of my relatives do when they go to a company. But that started a career path of working for some of the largest companies in the world, companies like Walmart, Zales, Sysco. And I learned through those opportunities, not only traveling the world and being in different manufacturing locations and different areas, but how complex business is and how what you do in one area can affect getting customers product in another country, like what we did in Thailand could affect what happens in India or China or anywhere else. So, the world is really not that small.

So, what that did for me was, it helped me understand what I needed to do to bring true value to the companies that I was working with. It was more about not just operational, but understanding risk. And so, I've always been drawn to that type of complexity. And so, as I continued my career, I started getting involved in ESG and sustainability and supply chain risk, and that led me to my role, my recent role at DuPont, where I led, as you mentioned, the ESG and supply chain risk area across 40 different countries. And so, my journey wasn't a straight line. I worked for a number of different companies in a number of different industries, but the common theme was always moving to more complex and more areas of opportunity where I could really hone that skill, which eventually led me to the boardroom because those are the type of skills boardrooms are looking for.

Megan Monson:

So, what prompted you to seek your first position on a board of directors?

Maria Prince:

Well, it's so funny. I didn't really go looking for it. It kind of found me. I was early in my career, and again, sponsors are really important, and one of my sponsors gave me an opportunity to do an assignment where I was reporting directly into the board of directors. And what I quickly understood about how they operated is that when you're in operations and you're doing your job, you're looking at how can I fix things? How can I make them better? What processes are out there? But they looked at things totally different. They would ask questions like, "How does it impact the long-term strategy of what we're trying to do? How does this prevent us from growing? What is the long-term impact of this decision or that decision?" And it really fascinated me that, these are women, and men, that had these long prestigious careers and they were able to sit back and utilize that experience to ask these type of questions.

And so, actively pursuing a board, you need to be able to change your perspective from operational to strategic and thinking about what's coming around the corner. I learned through that experience that my

operation experience was going to be valuable in board work, and having that experience interacting with that board early on and multiple boards later on in my career to solidify the fact that I wanted to go into board service, that I felt like I had a value that I could bring to the table.

Megan Monson: And I think that's great, Maria, thinking about how you could leverage both what you've already done and then shifting yourself into the mindset of what you're hearing in the boardrooms, that you can really apply your experience to that situation.

Maria Prince: The hard part for many of us is to convince yourself that your experience is valuable and that you belong there and that you don't have to check all the boxes, that you can utilize the experience you have to position yourself for an opportunity.

Megan Monson: Yeah. And I think that's actually a critical thing to say, because I know at least myself and some other women I speak to, it sometimes is harder for us to feel that we can do something if we don't check all of the boxes. And so, to hear someone as successful as yourself, that you were able to do that and to reframe your thinking, I think, is a really important piece of advice.

Diane Moss: And your exposure to that additional lens, that was being... people were looking through at the C-suite level, I think was invaluable. And I do think it's really important for women in particular to continue to rise up into positions of power, whether it's the C-suite, partnership, boards, et cetera. What are some of the things that you did to prepare yourself, in addition to what you've spoken about, in terms of how you were exposed and how that gave you some awareness to prepare yourself to serving on a board and finding those opportunities?

Maria Prince: Well, once you decide that you want to pursue it, and maybe you haven't decided, but you've gotten exposed to boards, you really have to treat it like a career goal. You have to be intentional, you have to have a plan, and you really have to get honest with yourself about where you are. What I did is I did a gap analysis. I did a gap analysis, and there's really two areas that you have to focus on in your gap analysis, your governance gaps. Do you know how boards work? Do you know what the committees do? Do you know what the fiduciary responsibilities are of a board? Do you know how they govern? And functional gaps. Are you familiar with the financials and how to read them and the audit committee and some of the functional things that a board does?

And so, for me, on the governance side, I had gotten a lot of exposure working with boards and the corporations that I was with, but I decided to join NACD, the National Association for Corporate Directors, and they had a certification program. And I tell you what, that was the most

valuable thing I could have ever done. I've sat on a number of nonprofit boards. I've sat on advisory boards throughout my career, and they really do teach you some governance and cadence of how boards work. But NACD helped me understand how corporate boards work and how they work in a way that I saw when I was doing some of those early career, and some of the things I talked about earlier.

So, to get an NACD certification, it is not easy, 20 hours of study and preparation, then sit for the exam. And then, you sit for the exam, and it's about four hours long, and it takes you through the functional ways of how boards work. But one thing that I found, it takes you through scenarios like you're in the boardroom. So it takes you through, these are the scenarios, what should you do in these different areas? And so, to me, it was one of the most valuable things I could have done. And you don't have to be late in your career or a corporate executive to be involved. They have an accelerator program that you can join. You just need to sit on a nonprofit board, sit on some type of board... it could be your community board, and for two years, they give you a chance to train and learn and study. I did that and that was one of the most valuable things I ever did... along with the experience that I got through some of the other board work that I've talked about.

The other thing that you have to do, I just want to add one more thing, as you do all of that work, you have to really start to build your value proposition, your story, and you have to dissect it down to a sentence or something you can recite very quickly. For me, I help boards see around corners on supply chain, ESG, and global operations. What I found in talking to other women and other folks looking for board seats is they want to talk about everything they've done, and unfortunately, you can't talk about everything you've done because people don't know where you bring the value.

So, it's really about being prepared, understanding your value, putting together your sentence two that you can articulate your value, and just really preparing yourself before the opportunity comes, because board opportunities aren't posted like jobs. They're a network of people that know you and trust you and have worked with you and are willing to say your name in a room that you're not in. So it's really that old phrase of preparation meets opportunity. If I had to give you one sentence, preparation meets opportunity when it comes to preparing for a board seat.

Megan Monson:

So Maria, in addition to all of the advice that you've already given us, which has been fantastic and is, at least in my mind, a lot of food for thought, is there anything else that you would say in terms of advice to

women who are interested in having a seat at the table and serving on a board of directors?

Maria Prince:

I read a book recently and I really found it valuable, and it's called *The Boardroom Journey* by Dr. Keith Dorsey, and what I really like about that book is he talks about your boardroom journey from early career to post-corporate life. And regardless of where you are, you can jump into that book and find yourself. And he gives stories about women at different stages of their career during the book. And it gives you a roadmap of how to think about board preparation, what type of boards you want to do, what industries you... It really makes you think. And I wish I had had that book sooner, because I spent a lot of time figuring that out on my own, with the help of some mentors, but this book is a really good roadmap. So that's one that I found very valuable in helping me solidify what I'd done and then found some additional gaps on things I need to work on.

Megan Monson:

No, that's great. I appreciate that suggestion. And I know I, for one, will be going out and purchasing that book.

Diane Moss:

Same. Actually Maria, this is how we met. We met at a dinner, and everybody around the table were people interested in pursuing board positions. And so, it was informative, it was networking, and it certainly led us to have this conversation today, which at that moment we thought would be helpful for more people to hear, and I'm so glad that we could bring you in today to speak about it. Thank you again for joining us. I'm sure our listeners have found your insight and perspective very useful. Anything else you would like to add? It doesn't have to be specific to board pursuing, but life, preparation.

Maria Prince:

Yeah. There's a couple of things:

One, be specific about your value, whether you're seeking a board or a role or an opportunity that you want. Be very specific about the value you bring. Be clear about your story. Don't let anyone control your narrative. Your narrative is yours. Be clear about your story.

Two, build the experience before you need it. Take the time, think about what you want to do. Think about what impact you want to make, not just the titles that you want. I had to do that myself. What impact or what do I really want to do versus what title I want to have?

And tell people. Tell people that you're interested in being on a board. Tell your mentors or sponsors. Tell the people that you might sit on that nonprofit board with or that committee with, people at work, you never know who's watching or who's listening, or you never know who may want to reach out to you and help you. I've had people help me just by

them knowing I want to be on a board, and they've helped me guide me to, "Hey, you should join NACD," like I mentioned earlier, or, "You should be in the room at this conference," and I've gone. So, some of those things come through people just advising me. But they had to know that this was something that I was interested in.

And the other thing I would tell you is don't wait to be 100% ready. I've said that a couple of times and I'm saying it more because it's really that important. Don't wait till you've checked all the boxes. I nominated myself through the folks at 50/50 Women on Boards encouraging me. I spoke at an event they had and they said, "Maria, you should really go for the 50/50 Women to Watch on boards." And I said, "Oh, that's interesting. I've never heard of them." But what they did is: You apply for it. You join a cohort for a year. They provide you training and development. They put you in rooms that you would never be in. We went to NASDAQ. We went to the Stock Exchange. We've been in rooms with CEOs and board chairs. And this is all part of trying to take 50 women that were selected nationally and grooming them for board seats. And so, not everyone gets it the first time they apply, but it's an organization specifically targeted to supporting women.

And so, 50/50 Women on Boards is another recommendation I would make. They're currently accepting nominations and they close April 30th. It's a pretty simple nomination process. The only other thing you have to do is, you do a one-minute video where you talk about what your value is to a board. And then, there's a committee of board members that select 50 women, and for a whole year, they groom you, they put you in rooms, they help you create a network that would take you years, I mean years to develop. And so, it's a really valuable organization. I would recommend that as well.

Megan Monson: And I think that's fantastic, especially because it echoes and reiterates some of the themes that we've been talking about, is it really is important to get women in these rooms and to be part of the conversation. So, to have an organization that's dedicated to that and helping to lessen the learning curve, as you said, because it can take years to get into those rooms and learn all of those things, so I think that's fantastic advice.

Maria Prince: Well, thank you. I think as much as we can help each other and give each other these tips, the better we all are. There's no reason to be a gatekeeper on any of this information. We should share as much as we can.

Diane Moss: Networking is an important function of most careers, I have to say. Thank you so much, Maria.

Maria Prince: Thank you for having me. And I would leave you with you've earned the right to be in the room. You should go out there and do what you can to get in the room and stay in the room, and don't be afraid and don't think you can't do it, because you absolutely can.

Megan Monson: Well, thank you so much, Maria. And thank you for all of our listeners for joining us for another episode of the Women's Initiative Network Real Talk. We'll see you next time.

Rachel Dikovics: Thank you for listening to today's episode. Please subscribe to our podcast series at [lowenstein.com/podcast](https://www.lowenstein.com/podcast), or find us on iTunes, Spotify, Pandora, or SoundCloud. Lowenstein Sandler podcast series are presented by Lowenstein Sandler and cannot be copied or rebroadcast without consent. The information provided is intended for a general audience. It is not legal advice or substitute for the advice of counsel. Prior results do not guarantee a similar outcome. The content reflects the personal views and opinions of the participants. No attorney-client relationship is being created by this podcast, and all rights are reserved.