



NEW PARTNER, NEW PROJECTS AND TAKING CLIENTS INTO THE NEW COMPLIANCE ERA

MV Conversation with Cláudia Fernandes Martins

Macedo Vitorino's newest partner reflects on life as a lawyer, balancing the personal and professional, as well as an insight into her newest compliance initiative.

What Cláudia Fernandes Martins truly loves about the profession is how many options you have, both in practice and in terms of continuing to learn and grow as a lawyer. "Being a lawyer gives me a range of different challenges, which truly fits my personality and profile," she explains. "When I started, I didn't have a precise idea of what I was getting into, but, fortunately, it hasn't disappointed!"

As Macedo Vitorino's newly-elect partner, Cláudia Fernandes Martins is the second female partner at the firm. Her practice focuses on commercial and corporate law, competition law and intellectual property, and she heads up the Privacy and Data Protection department.

Looking back at when she began her studies, partnership wasn't necessarily the plan. "I really wanted to become a law professor, but when I finished university, we didn't have the options that are available now, and becoming a lawyer was the natural path to take."

From theoretical student to practical lawyer

In 2003, after graduating from Lisbon University's Law School, Cláudia Fernandes Martins joined Macedo Vitorino as a trainee. Completing a Postgraduate Degree in State Aid and Tax Law in 2005 and a Master's in EU and Competition Law in 2008 focusing on private enforcement, her foundations as a lawyer have always been rooted in the area of competition. "The more I learned and delved into competition, the more I enjoyed it," she says. "Competition covers such a broad range of topics and interlinks with so many other areas, that's what keeps me so interested. And I relish that challenge."

Cláudia Fernandes Martins' biggest challenge was the switch from a theoretical mindset to a more practical one. "Being theoretical is a huge advantage when studying. But when I started practising, I had to become far more practical and conscious of what actually works in reality. Clients want solutions, based on theory of course, but that work in practice and in the real world."

It was a steep learning curve and Cláudia Fernandes Martins admits you never stop learning. "I'm always thinking about what clients need from us that they can put into practice. It's a constant balancing act between legal theory and real-world practice." This is something she notices has changed with the younger generations of lawyers. "They try to give answers and solutions straight away without necessarily taking into account the theory to support them."

Her advice to the younger generation would be to gain as much practical experience as you can. "Anyone who is going to be dealing with clients day-to-day needs practical experience and to ensure to focus on both the law and the real world, taking both factors into account. I would also advise to grab every opportunity you can with both hands." As you get older and have families, she explains, your options can become more limited, and your choices at times must be dictated by your personal lives. "The younger generation needs to take full advantage of this time in their lives when they are free to try it all. Study as much as you can, take on those projects that excite you and dedicate yourself to going for your goals."



Balancing the personal and professional

One thing Cláudia Fernandes Martins has also had to perfect was how to hit the right balance between her professional and personal life, especially with a young family. "The balance has to be looked at every single day. You need to balance the needs of your children with those of your clients, all the while remembering you only have two hands, which sometimes isn't enough!"

She ensures to keep her personal and profession lives separate, and not to do both at the same time. "When I'm with the children I'm 100% present, so I try not to take much work home. Once they're asleep, then I can be 100% present for anything I need to finish for my clients."

While the demands of a young family affect you more physically, now that Cláudia Fernandes Martins' children are a little older the demands are more mental. "You have to be on alert 24-7 and anticipate: Is everything alright? Is there anything that isn't apparent, any danger or something flying under the radar? I'm the mother, and my role is to find the solution."

This is the approach she also applies to clients. "There really are transferable skills from both sides, and I feel I have really grown as a lawyer since being a mother. My maturity and practical side have improved dramatically. With children there's only so much theory – you have to be hands-on and practical! I want my children to see what I do, how I do it and why I do it. I want to be the best as an example for them, and I want to do the same for my clients."

Taking clients into the new compliance era

Cláudia Fernandes Martins credits much of her latter career path decisions to her young family. "This is something I've heard from other female lawyers, when you have children you gain a new perspective on your personal and professional life."

When her youngest (four) was born, she remembers being at home reading up on the upcoming GDPR (EU General Data Protection Regulations) and wanting to get involved in what was coming. So as soon as she was back at work she began working on a new project on the GDPR. This led her to spearhead an initiative that has been supporting clients through the GDPR implementation period and beyond, as well as educating them on the power of data and its constant evolution. "This was really a moment of change for me."

Cláudia Fernandes Martins is now developing another innovative offering for their clients in the area of compliance. "Compliance is integral to so many areas of law, and ever-changing with new rules, best practices and sanctions. We noticed when working day-to-day with clients that many were merely ticking boxes and conducting internal audits and thinking that keeps them compliant," she explains. "Compliance goes so much deeper than that. Check boxes are no longer enough to keep you safe. So we want to educate and support our clients through every step of their compliance journey and ensure that they are complying 100% in every area of this complex field."

She gives the example of internal and external audits. Internal audits run the risk of reasoning bias and that's where things get overlooked or go undetected. This also applies if you are using the same auditing companies year-in year-out. "Clients need fresh, objective eyes to detect any errors or omissions that weren't found through internal or usual external audits," she says. "A partner that can help uncover the



key issues that haven't been identified and put clients on the right path in terms of transparency, compliance, ethics, social responsibilities etc – that's where the added value lies."

The goal is to make Macedo Vitorino a go-to firm for compliance, in the same way as with Data Protection, and the firm's newest partner is confident their new product will prove to be the added value that clients are looking for.

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