Hulse in Faces of HR: Why Kristen Hulse Traded the Bar for the Bench of Talent

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After joining Haynes Boone as its first-ever chief talent officer in November, Kristen Uhl Hulse sat down with *Faces of HR*, produced by HR Daily Advisor, to discuss the unique, 360-degree perspective she is bringing to the firm's workforce strategy. With a career spanning over two decades, Hulse has successfully navigated the shift from practicing law to pioneering the "people side" of the profession and will look to continue her success at Haynes Boone.

Read an excerpt below.

Who is/was your biggest influence in the industry?
My greatest professional influence is Maggie Callicrate, Chief Executive Officer for Coblentz Patch Duffy & Bass LLP in San Francisco, who hired me for my first professional role in this space (serving as the firm's first director of recruitment and professional development). Though I felt like quite an imposter in my first few months, I knew that Maggie was invested in shaping the build-out of my skillset. As exceptional of a financial and business leader as she is, to me she is the ultimate people strategist. Maggie made time for me every single day and guided my people first perspective to talent. She contextualized complicated issues, guided me through her thought process, let me know when not to sweat the small stuff, and always made me feel that I had something valuable to contribute. I can only hope to be as motivating and insightful of a leader as she has been to so many.

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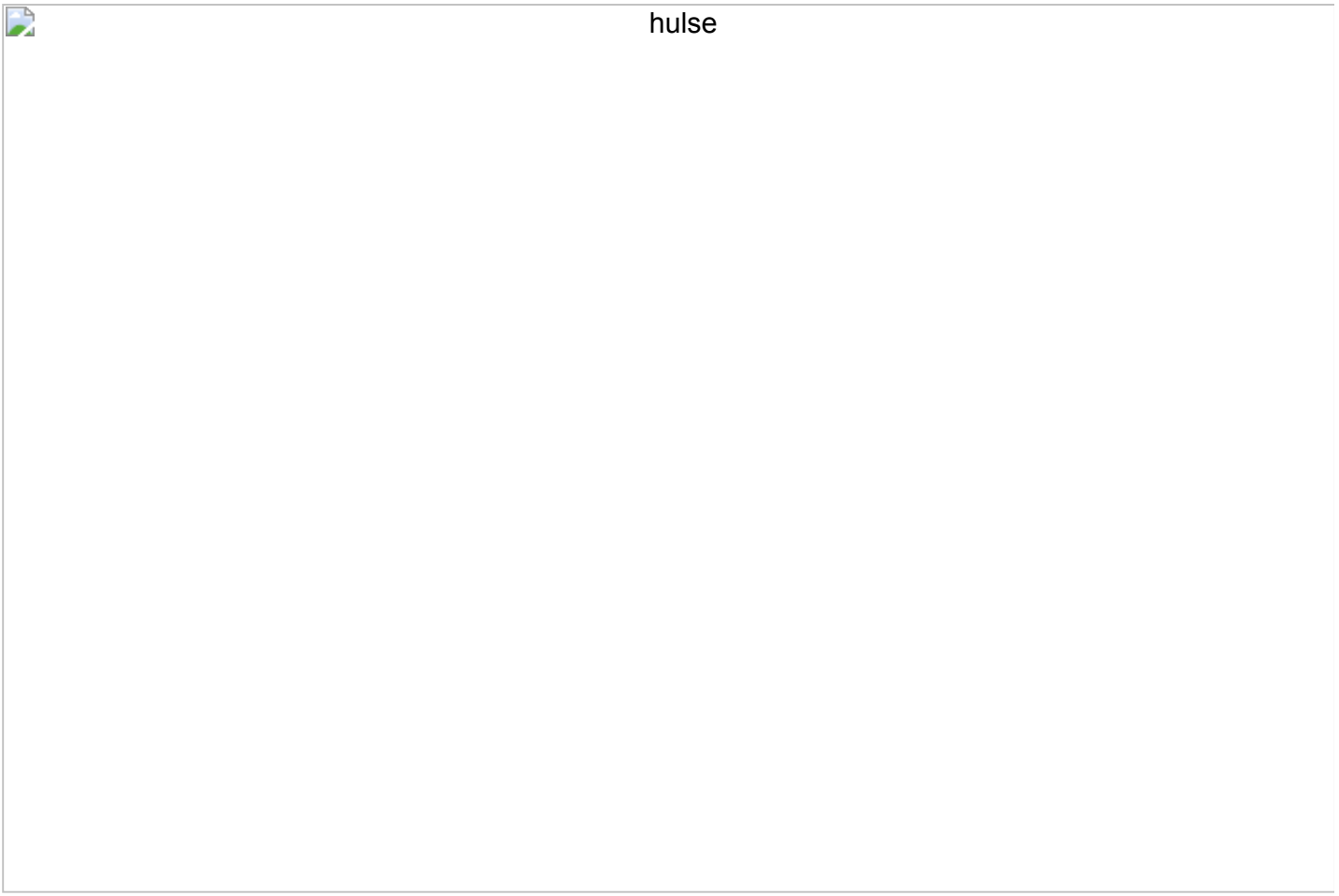

What's your best mistake and what did you learn from it?
I love the framing of this question, as I'm a very growth-oriented person who is always learning. Again, here I'm going to reflect on my time in private practice. I was a junior associate working from the firm's London office when I was asked to review and provide comments on a client's public-facing advertising materials. I approached the task from a strong regulatory perspective and crafted a laundry list of several potential issues I'd spotted, which I emailed to my supervising partner in bullet-point format. The partner came to my office with some critical feedback. Suffice it to say that my issue-spot lacked contextual analysis and recommendation – I wasn't proactively solving a problem, and I certainly wasn't recognizing the client's business reality or how they might receive and react to this information. The partner shared that he (and our client) would be relying on my professional judgment, so I needed to be more solution-oriented and put myself in the shoes of our client (who was not a lawyer).

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This all sounds very basic, but it was really a turning point in my career because it kicked me more in the direction of being others-focused in my approach to advice. It's when I transformed from being an issue-spotting technician to a people-oriented problem-solver, and when I started to craft my written and oral communications with BLUF (bottom line up front), mindful of the need to provide a contextual recommendation that will meet my client (internal or external) where they are. Now I always try to place myself in my client's shoes to understand their perspective and how they may receive the information I'm about to share – and tailor accordingly.

What's your favorite part about working in the industry? What's your least favorite part, and how would you change it?
My favorite part of supporting people-oriented functions is simply the opportunity to be consulted as a resource by a variety of personnel, and to feel that I've been helpful in some way – to them, and by extension to the firm. No matter how challenging the problem that I'm tackling, having problem-solving as my job is exactly where I want to be. In close second, I truly relish the opportunity to be creative in building teams and processes that set our people up for sustained success. I am always in brainstorm-mode and seeking new ways of doing things to meet the moment at hand.

To read the full feature from *Faces*, click here.

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