



CCWC MEMBER FEATURE

From the Early Days to Present



Wanji Walcott
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Chief Legal Officer and
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Discover Financial Services*

“ **Don't let anyone tell you that you can't achieve your goals** ”

Q: What job and title did you have when you first joined Corporate Counsel Women of Color?

A: *In 2004, when I first became involved with CCWC, my title was Director, Counsel, Technology Law Group. At the time, I had one direct report (a paralegal).*

Q: What job and title do you have today?

A: *Today, my title is Executive Vice President, Chief Legal Officer and General Counsel. I manage the Legal Organization and Government Relations at Discover Financial Services.*

Q: What road did you take to get to your current job?

A: *Early in my career, my company repeatedly talked about the importance of leadership skills, so I became very focused on improving my leadership and management skills. I also regularly volunteered for assignments and initiatives, some of which allowed me to gain new skills, add value, and increase my visibility. I always made it a point to demonstrate excellence, reliability and confidence . . . even when I didn't exactly feel that way. I focused on developing authentic relationships both inside and outside of the legal department and also with outside counsel. Over time, I took on additional responsibility including management responsibility. I also regularly looked for opportunities to improve how we did things within my organization. I identified many opportunities to have a positive impact on the department and the legal industry. At some point, I began to be more direct with management about my ambitions and interest in advancing my career. I did this in a way that was clear, but not annoying. Throughout my journey I have remained curious about the business, industry trends, innovation, and ways I could add value. I have also been very deliberate about managing my brand, pursuing my passions and helping others.*

Q: As you look back over your career, what career strategies would you give to the women of color attorneys in the Corporate Counsel Women of Color network?

A:

- 1. Speak like a business person and not a lawyer.*
- 2. Operate in sync with your boss . . . by being proactive, agile and adaptable. Understand your boss's priorities and deliverables and figure out how you can support the same.*
- 3. I learned the following at a CCWC conference and really believe it to be true: As your career progresses, continued progression becomes dependent upon your network, your experience and your skill, in that order.*
- 4. Be supportive of other women and always be mentoring at least one person.*
- 5. Don't let anyone tell you that you can't achieve your goals.*

Q: Is there any one take away that has stayed with you from the CCWC early days of the networking receptions and/or our annual conference.

A: *Within the CCWC family is a wealth of experience, knowledge and support. I have looked up to so many women in CCWC who have been my mentors and friends or who I have admired from afar. In turn, I pay it forward with hopes that I can inspire the next generation of female lawyers of color.*