

Q: Why do you think it is important to celebrate International Women's Day/Month?

A: It is incumbent upon us – as a legacy for all those women who have gone before – to recognise and to celebrate the achievements of women.

As we know, our global society does not offer parity. Although I strongly believe that women should be celebrated every day, the lack of equity necessitates that we have specific times when we raise the profile of gender equality in a deliberate manner. We therefore need to encourage International Women's Day/Month as a focused period to raise awareness and take action.

For me, IWD/M is also about role modelling for women to celebrate themselves – to celebrate their brilliance and uniqueness. In particular, those women who are less forthcoming about their achievements (from the everyday to the extraordinary) should have the opportunity to have their excellence and resilience highlighted.

Q: What was your journey to get to where you are now?

A: The journey in my career so far has been fuelled by fervour, focus and house music.

Since I watched Tomorrow Never Dies at the age of seven, I have had a consistent vision and singularity of what I wanted to do – to investigate. A cocktail of creativity and tenacity, injected with the drive that was instilled in me, has provided the foundations for me to be able to achieve that goal of investigating for a living.

I have a BA in Russian and an MA in International Security and Terrorism from the University of Nottingham, plus I studied for a GDL part time whilst working at my previous company. I didn't want to be a lawyer – just curious! Fair to say that all those hours in the library and late nights at work have been intertwined with a lot of fun, too.

Q: What challenges have you faced as a woman in the industry, and how have you overcome them?

A: At times I have been underestimated, unsupported and sexualised as a woman in the industry - these are issues that a plethora of women experience. One of the key issues is that sometimes our gender is seen before our skill; we can therefore be subjected to stereotypes and untrue judgements.

I focus on staying centred to my own values. I remain unwilling to compromise just because I am a woman and - even if I am not always feeling it on the inside - I will try to exude steadfast confidence to combat these challenges. I am happy to own every aspect of my femininity.

Of unquantifiable importance for me is to have a satellite of brilliant and bold women around me. I am so lucky, for example, to have been a part of the Female Fraud Forum (FFF) for the last few years, and truly honoured to last month have been elected as the new Chair. The FFF is a multi-disciplinary organisation in our industry comprising lawyers, investigators and forensic accountants. Our growing community strives to help women towards attaining ever high realms of professional growth through social and educational events – but most key of all: we understand one another and have each other's backs. In a male dominated field, I feel fortunate to be working at a firm (Schillings) where I work with many ambitious and motivating women on a day-to-day basis.



PHOEBE WATERS

Associate
Schillings

Phoebe joined Schillings from Burford Capital's Asset Recovery team where she specialised in complex international investigations – particularly around the enforcement of high-value awards against sovereign states. Having been Membership Secretary of the Female Fraud Forum (FFF) for two years, Phoebe was elected Chair of the FFF in February 2022.



ThoughtLadies that **inspire**





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Q: What advice would you give to other women in the industry building their careers?

A: The core tenets I would advise sticking to are curiosity, confidence and kindness.

Imagination is a beautiful and powerful tool, and one that I think is often understated. That isn't to say that we don't all have to work incredibly hard, but unforgivably wriggling out of the mould that society often shapes for you and trusting your own fantasies is no bad thing.

Finally - find your allies and know your stuff!

Q: What women have supported or inspired you throughout your career and why?

A: My mum, who truly is a phenomenal force of nature, has been a key support and the source of my inspiration since I can remember. As a teaser of her professional achievements, in 1986 in her 20s she created Childline alongside Esther Rantzen, and now responsible for around 40,000 children in her current role, she has committed her whole career to safeguarding people and resolutely helped them achieve their potential. A feminist, in the most wonderfully daring and effervescent way, she has taught and encouraged me to harness my power as a woman, to challenge injustices, and to have courage.

My original ally, cheerleader and co-conspirator is my sister. As the truest of best friends, our support for one another is unwavering - and that includes mutual mentoring throughout our careers. As if her becoming a qualified Doctor in Clinical Psychology at 28 wasn't impressive enough, she is about to give birth to a baby girl who I am certain will be another indescribably incredible human. She will always continue to inspire me.

Q: How can we move forward in the industry to raise awareness against bias and take further action for equality?

A: The first IWD gathering was in 1911, and although this was so frustratingly long ago, we must not lose momentum in the fight for equality.

We must continue to fiercely support each other as women and find and appreciate our allies in those that may not share our gender.

We must be brave in championing women's achievements, be courageous in challenging what is not ok, and push forward in removing stigmas that do not help women progress.

