



Burcu Dal Gökalp

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Burcu Dal Gökalp graduated from Ankara Law Faculty in 2000. She pursued L.L.M. in International Commercial Law at the University of Nottingham in 2002 and an L.L.M. in IT Law at the University of Stockholm in 2005. During her career, her main focuses were mergers and acquisitions, corporate and commercial law, contracts law, and competition law. She has led remarkable mergers and acquisitions deals and joint venture deals. She also oversees startup law, capital markets law, real estate law, and compliance matters, particularly on data protection law.

She is a member of the Istanbul Bar and International Bar Association. Likewise, she is married and has one daughter.

The Legal Industry Reviews: Türkiye had the pleasure of discussing with Burcu Dal Gökalp, founding partner of Gökalp Arslan Law Firm. With a career spanning over two decades, Burcu shares her passion for justice, the journey that led her to establish her own law firm, and her relentless dedication to empowering women workers. Join us as we explore her inspirations, motivations, and the challenges she has overcome in her pursuit of excellence in the legal field.

Could you please introduce yourself to the readers and share a few things you find important for them to know about you?

I am a legal professional in love with her job. After working for more than twenty years in law firms and

as an in-house legal counsel, I founded Gökalp Arslan Law Firm with my partner Mr. Arslan. Personally, I always feel responsible for standing for justice. I am also a mother of one daughter. Therefore, apart from working for my own law firm and my own practice area (corporate law), I volunteer for the mission of making the world a better place for women workers and fighting for their empowerment.

What led you to choose a career in corporate law and M&A? Can you pinpoint a specific moment or experience that influenced this decision?

The answer is quite simple and straightforward. My passion started as a student at Ankara University, Law Faculty. My favorite subject was commercial law with all its courses, commercial enterprise law, negotiable

instruments, corporate law, and others. I used to enjoy attending the classes and getting familiar with the practices. I pursued my master's degree also in international commercial law, and I was convinced it was the subject that I should focus on.

As my career started, I began to work as an associate at the corporate and M&A department of Paksoy Law Firm. It was very demanding and time-consuming, yet it was very glowing and interesting. Since then, corporate law and M&A have taken root in me, and it is still growing.

Was there someone in your life who inspired and motivated you to pursue a career in corporate law? Perhaps someone who encouraged you, saying, "Burcu, it's going to be interesting; it's going to be adventurous"?

My main reason for choosing law is my admiration for my uncle, who was a successful lawyer and a member of parliament who served for many years. He advised me to specialize in corporate law when I was a university student. However, I would not have followed his advice if I did not enjoy the subject. I believe the principal drive was my personal enthusiasm for commercial law. A professional career is a lifetime journey of dedication and daily long hours of hard work; therefore, it can only be developed by great passion and devotion.

As a corporate and M&A specialist, what aspect of your work do you find most enjoyable or fulfilling?

Corporate law, particularly M&A, is a concrete, vivid and versatile branch of law. It is closely attached to business life, since its main aim is serving the business itself. Therefore, corporate law should be as dynamic as business life to meet its needs.

I enjoy being part of this ever-evolving system and supporting the operation and management with creative solutions when there is a problem standing in their way. Corporate lawyers are the problem solvers that remove the legal and procedural barriers to proceed.

On the M&A side, I find it very exciting to be introduced to a new company/sector for each deal, to embrace it with all its details, to set up a strategy/structure to meet all sides' benefits, to analyze documents, to negotiate and close it for a new beginning. An M&A deal is a full-fledged transaction, and acting as the captain of this compelling journey is

both appealing and challenging. You can never know what you will encounter on the journey, that is why, you should be very well-prepared.

Since corporate law has a lot to offer in terms of exploring, I never get bored, or I never get enough of acting as an M&A lawyer.

Transitioning from being an in-house counsel at Eczacıbaşı Holding to establishing your own law firm must have been a significant step. Could you share some insights into that journey and how it shaped your career?

I had always dreamed of establishing my own law firm. I was so lucky that I was granted the opportunity to experience both positions: working as an associate in Paksoy Law firm which is one of the biggest law firms in Turkey and working as an in-house counsel in one of the biggest Turkish conglomerates. Not only that, but I am so lucky that I learned the profession from the best, and I am so grateful for all they contributed to my career.

Since I was part of a law firm for many years, I have been aware of the necessities of private practice and being a partner. On the other hand, I believe that working as an in-house legal counsel in Eczacıbaşı Holding was an important milestone in my career. It helped me to understand the dynamics of corporate life, the business, and the sector itself. It introduced me to a perspective to grab the needs and concerns of the management and the operational teams. With the help



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of my long-term experience as an in-house counsel, I am able to respond to the needs of my clients rapidly and in the most tailor-made way in which they can easily understand and directly implement.

Working at a law firm and working as an in-house lawyer are two different and complementary bricks of my career that helped me to establish Gokalp Arslan Law Firm. They all prepared me for my current position and gave me the confidence to cover all aspects of doing my job perfectly.

From your experience, what essential knowledge, experiences, and skills do you believe aspiring lawyers need to succeed in corporate law and M&A?

Corporate law, particularly M&A, is an ever-evolving and complex area of law. Since its main aim is to serve the needs of commercial and corporate life, it must be as fast and well-equipped as the business itself. Therefore, corporate lawyers need to have profound and solid knowledge. They should have sufficient information on the substantial topics of private law subjects, mainly corporate law, and code of obligations. Good corporate lawyers should be interested in the business as well, they should keep up with the developments and remain updated. They should improve their mentality and perspective in terms of business to spot the risks and find working solutions.

If they would like to specialize especially on the transactional side – M&A side, they must accept working for long hours and adapting their life to this profession. They should appreciate teamwork, for M&A itself, is a work of collective input.

Needless to say, patience and hard work are the mandatory keys to open the doors of success.

Your career has been remarkable, but what goals or accomplishments do you still aspire to achieve in the future?

Our law firm, Gokalp Arslan Law Firm, is my second child. Running my own business had been my dream for many years, however, I decided not to postpone it after giving birth to my daughter. Being a mother, taking the responsibility of growing somebody or something, is the most amazing and satisfying emotion. Thereafter, I decided to dedicate the rest of my career and my life to growing my own business and bringing our law firm up among the top-tier law firms in Turkey.

What motivates and drives you in your work every day? What keeps your passion for corporate law and M&A alive?

My profession is my ambition and my hobby as well. Most of the time, I do not need anything else for the motivation. On the other hand, I enjoy being a team member and exchanging ideas. My business partner,



Mr. Arslan, has been a good friend of mine for long years. We care to choose other team members among the ones who may work with all in harmony, we try to build a friendly business environment. It is my joy to see my colleagues and share my day with them. I prefer to work at the office on a daily routine. I am not the type of person who can work remotely at home instead of being surrounded by people.

Everyone has moments when they need to recharge. How do you re-energize yourself when your mood needs an adjustment? Do you have any hobbies or activities you enjoy outside of work?

The most challenging aspect of being a corporate lawyer, especially an M&A lawyer, is having a work-private life balance. You should accept that there is no such balance, notably at the beginning of the career and/or if there is a deal with a strict deadline. I am still waiting for some free time to write my Ph.D. thesis

I gave up trying hard to pursue a regular schedule for a hobby or a sport. Instead, I do sports whenever I find a free time slot, mainly in the early mornings. I prefer outdoor sports, running, swimming or skiing. Exercising makes me happy and healthy. Other than that, I spare time for my daughter and my spouse. We enjoy meeting with our friends and attending cultural activities together.

What are you most proud of?

It is the hardest question. It is not easy talking about yourself. I hope nobody will take it as a humble bragging. I am proud of my courage to give up everything I built in many years and start this journey from scratch. It is not easy to set up and grow a business. I respect and appreciate each person who dared and became successful. I would like to thank my spouse and my family who supported me and brought out that courage hidden in me. And I would like to thank my business partner who joined me on this journey, share the excitement and the burden with me.



How would your team describe you?

I believe that this question must be addressed to the team members. Therefore, I conveyed it on behalf of you. The answers are quite gratifying, I suppose they tried to be polite

They described me as "passionate, dedicated, and wise. At the same time very friendly and supportive. Burcu is a practical problem solver and a very valuable team player."

I love teamwork and I have always invested in human relations. Now, it is great to see that it is rewarded.

What is your motto?

My motto is "making everything beautiful around me". Professionally, I am working hard to be a good lawyer and deliver the best work out in terms of law. Good quality of work is more important than profitability. Obviously, it is appreciated by our clients. We are grateful for their trust in us.

Simultaneously, I would like to volunteer and contribute to women's empowerment and educating future generations. As a restless follower of Ataturk's principles, I am committed to taking on this mission.

Thank you for inviting me to this issue and for this privileged opportunity.