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## **From quality control engineer to healthcare lawyer**

Exotic birds at Healthcare: Elizabeth Levy

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**Elizabeth Levy worked in mechanical engineering for eight years. Then she decided it was time for a twist – and time for law school. Today, Levy works as an attorney within the Diagnostics (DX) Division.**



Elizabeth Levy: The former mechanical engineer is now working as an attorney

**Elizabeth, could you provide some information on your education? What did you study?**

I studied liberal arts at a seven sisters school and decided to switch to engineering after working on a road

crew the summer after my freshman year. I transferred to a state university and studied first civil, then mechanical, engineering.

**What was your first job after graduation? When did you decide for Siemens as an employer?**

I moved before graduation from TX to Boston, during a recession, to be with my spouse who was studying medicine. Jobs were scarce and I took the only offer I got, from a specialty chemicals company in its Quality Control engineering department. I ended up at Siemens by acquisition, twice – once via Osram (formerly GTE Products, where I was an engineer, then a patent agent), and again 15 years later via Bayer Healthcare Diagnostics, which was purchased by Siemens.

**What made you decide to strive for law as an entirely new field? And what did your colleagues say?**

I was working at Sylvania, the lighting division of GTE, as an engineer and saw our plants closing and moving out of the northeast to less expensive states and out of the U.S.

A patent attorney with whom I'd worked on two of my own patents encouraged me to consider attending law school at night while continuing to work, hinting that I might be hired into the GTE law department. Long story short, I got into law school, started attending night classes while working days, and was offered a job in the GTE law department to write patent applications.

GTE paid my tuition so I had no debt on graduating. I'm not sure what my engineering colleagues thought, but they themselves were looking for alternatives as more of our plants closed. Engineering and law is still an unusual combination.

**It must have been tough to attend classes after work...**

Yes, it was tough but I was motivated by the new opportunity I had been given.

It takes 4 years going at night. I did feel as if I were under house arrest; I resented how other people could have fun after work and on weekends, while I had to study and be in the library.

My employer was very supportive, however, and that helped my morale.

**After finishing law school, how did your career proceed?**

I was fortunate to be offered two law firm jobs upon graduating, and I took one of them. I worked in 3 law firms and was a partner in two of them, including a large international firm.

After 8 years of law firm practice I took an in-house job at Bayer Healthcare as a patent attorney, and after 3 years I moved to the general commercial side of the house.

I am currently a "business unit" lawyer or, as I refer to it, the "first responder" lawyer for this business. I really enjoy that.

**Do you sometimes still benefit from your engineering skills at work?**

Absolutely. I consider scientists and engineers to be my kin: we studied the same curriculum, speak the same

language and share an affinity for analysis and problem-solving. We appreciate elegant solutions, too.

**When looking at the job market, engineers are highly in-demand – do you sometimes regret your decision to turn to law instead?**

Not at all. I still work with my engineering colleagues, I understand the projects they are working on, I appreciate technological advances, and I also really like working in the law. I wish everyone could have a law education – it is so relevant to our daily lives and our work.

**What would you tell people who feel that after some years of work, they would like to start something new?**

Change is hard, especially when you start something new and have to be the junior person all over again. However, mental stimulation is really important to me, and I would encourage anyone who is feeling ready for a change to take that step in a new direction.

You'll never know what else you might really like or hate, or be really good or bad at, if you don't try new things.

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