



Within a short time of becoming a Starbucks partner (what we call our employees), I knew I had found my heart. It wasn't the product (although it's a pretty sweet deal to have the world's finest coffee at your fingertips), the innovative work or the positive "buzz" in the hallways. It was the sense that I was part of something bigger, a different kind of company. Since its beginning in 1971, Starbucks has reflected a culture of doing the right thing and acting with humanity and respect, positively impacting our partners, our customers, and our communities.

At Starbucks, we continually ask ourselves: "What is the role and responsibility of a for-profit, public company in today's society?" This question shapes our business as we use our size and resources to make a positive impact while still creating value for our shareholders. Fueled by our mission and values, we seek to inspire and nurture the human spirit, one person, one cup, and one neighborhood at a time. It's that lens of humanity that creates our culture.

As a legal professional, it is both reassuring and highly motivating when your primary role is to help your client (and employer) to do what is right, and to preserve its legacy of integrity. When I joined Starbucks, I quickly learned that this legacy, and our mission and values, are brought to life most clearly in our retail stores, and are the basis for our success as a company. As part of our immersion, new corporate or support partners (such as the company's lawyers) are encouraged to spend time actively working in our stores, experiencing the daily interactions between our store partners and their customers.

During my store immersion, and honestly, every time I go into a Starbucks store, I am inspired by the atmosphere our store partners create. They are passionate about doing business the right way and it shows through the way they treat each other, their customers, and their communities. They strive to create a culture of warmth and belonging, where everyone is welcome. Starbucks has become the "third place" where friends gather together, students work on school projects, and book clubs hold their meetings. It is a community nurtured by the authentic leadership of our store partners.

We also believe that we are stronger when everyone is afforded an opportunity to succeed, and we are treating each other with respect and dignity. Starbucks' long history of creating pathways to opportunity strengthens our culture, inspires confidence in our partners, and creates innovation and success. From our earliest days, we have offered full health coverage and stock options to our partners. We have expanded on these opportunities by introducing new education benefits, committing to hiring veterans and their families, and creating employment opportunities that help launch careers for young people who face systemic barriers to jobs and education.

As a member of Starbucks' senior leadership team, I see the innovations and successes that help us compete in a global marketplace, supporting 22,000 stores a week in nearly 70 countries, serving 75 million customers per week. I also see the obstacles that arise for us to overcome. How we act when faced with these challenges is what defines us and it is during those instances when it is most critical to maintain a culture of ethics and integrity where our partners feel supported in doing the right thing.

A CUP OF KINDNESS

Growing a Business Through the Lens of Humanity

Written by Lucy Lee Helm

I joined Starbucks 16 years ago, transitioning from private practice as a trial lawyer. My law firm was an exceptional place to work, with wonderful colleagues and fascinating clients. But while I was a fine advocate and a successful contributor to the firm, my heart was not in the business of private legal practice.



A key component to promoting ethical business practices and supporting our partners is our Business Ethics and Compliance program, which sits in our law department. Our Business Ethics and Compliance team partners with senior leaders and the Audit & Compliance Committee of our Board of Directors to develop strategies to support the company's culture and values. We launched our first Ethics and Compliance Helpline in 2000, which is now available to our partners 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Since then, we have added many more tools and resources to keep up with the changing demographics of our partners and the global nature of the business. The leader of our Business Ethics and Compliance program, our Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer, has dual reporting to me and to our Board of Directors, which creates a state of independence.

For us, maintaining a standalone ethics and compliance program underscores our advisory role, helping our team more effectively support the business. It allows us to focus our efforts to create targeted training and awareness initiatives, conduct independent investigations, and consult with leaders to manage the company's legal and regulatory risks. It also fosters an environment where partners can feel supported in making ethical decisions at work and speaking up if they have concerns.

This culture of transparency, honesty, and respect opens up authentic conversations between partners at all levels of the company. One important channel to facilitate these conversations is our tradition of holding regular partner Open Forums. For over 20 years, Starbucks has gathered partners at our headquarters and field offices to update them on the company's performance, answer questions, and allow them to bring up ideas, issues or potential concerns in a trusted space.

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In December 2014, following tragic events and racial unrest that unfolded across the US, our Chairman and CEO, Howard Schultz, called an impromptu Open Forum at the Starbucks Support Center (our corporate headquarters) for partners to share perspectives on race relations. Despite the raw emotions, our partners were able to share personal experiences and feelings in an open and safe environment. What most impressed me was Howard's willingness to open a door to honest and potentially controversial conversations, and our partners' willingness to talk about their feelings and concerns passionately, authentically, and personally. I have never witnessed such respect, grace, and vulnerability between people on a topic that few are willing to address. I felt deep gratitude to work for a company that could create the kind of personal connections and trust that allowed the conversations to take place.

The dialogue did not end once we returned to work. Not only did we hold additional internal Open Forums around the US (engaging more than 4,000 partners in those conversations), but the door was opened for additional and ongoing partner connections on race relations and the realities facing our country. And we are continuing to ask ourselves: what are our individual and collective responsibilities, as citizens and Starbucks partners, to our country as well as our company?

This intersection between our social conscience and responsible commerce has shaped our company. We are far from perfect, but I am proud to be part of a company that values the leadership that is required to do what is right for our partners, customers, and community, and that recognizes that strong ethics and integrity are not simply a corporate necessity, but essential to our success.

Author Biography

Lucy Lee Helm has been a partner (employee) at Starbucks for 16 years. She was appointed as Executive Vice President, General Counsel, and Secretary in May 2012. In her role, Lucy leads the global Law & Corporate Affairs department, including 210 legal and compliance partners in 16 offices around the world. In addition to her work at Starbucks, Lucy is a member of the Board of Directors of the global humanitarian agency Mercy Corps. She also serves on the Board of the Washington YMCA Youth & Government Program and the advisory board of Disability Rights Advocates, a non-profit disability law center in Berkeley, CA. In 2014, Lucy was a recipient of Legal Momentum's Women of Achievement Award, and was recognized by the National Law Journal as one of America's 50 Outstanding General Counsel.