

PROFILE

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By Krystal Scanlon

The Drawdown (TDD): Having been in the COO function since 2019, what have been your

biggest achievements so far?

Hina Ahmad (HA): The most recent one that comes to mind is managing through the pandemic with a fully remote workforce. It was a big change for the industry overall, but I feel we steered through it well. I chair our Emergency Management Team (EMT). We created two sub-committees: an internally focused and externally focused committee.

Within the internally focused committee, we introduced various client and employee-focused programmes to ensure all stakeholders remained connected and engaged. Relevant internal experts helped with these two areas. For example, our IT, office management and HR heads worked with me and our head of marketing and communications on some great programmes, which received positive feedback. These included a home office and gym reimbursement schemes, the latter also extended to include home gym equipment and online fitness apps. We introduced a month of wellness last June, when everyone was feeling a little run down after a year of “pandemic life” and for some of our offices we introduced home testing kits. We also focused heavily on communication, which involved weekly and monthly email communications so everyone knew the latest updates in and around the firm, as well as our confidential mental health support programme, to keep employees engaged and motivated throughout. This was all made available on a portal all employees can access.

The externally focused sub-committee, which was spearheaded by our communications, product, client relations and investment management teams, sent out our investment management client updates very early in the pandemic to inform our client base what was happening in each of our strategies.



CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER AT CAPITAL DYNAMICS

HINA AHMAD,

discusses moving from the legal and compliance team to her current role, how the team has leveraged technology to keep up with rapid growth, as well as plans for evolving the firm’s pandemic sub-committees

We issued position papers and more formal risk-rating letters for LPs. We also introduced web-based meetings for investors and continued to ensure our LPs had additional opportunities for communication with us. Keeping everyone close during such a time of uncertainty ensured our LPs did not feel isolated, but instead abreast of any updates and informed at all times.

TDD: You originally joined Capital Dynamics in 2014 as global compliance officer and US general counsel. What was the firm’s legal and compliance set up when you joined and what processes did you put in place?

HA: When I joined in January 2014, I was fortunate to join a firm which already had a very robust legal and compliance framework. It was more of a matter of building out and optimising our network to support the firm’s rapid growth and expansion we’re experiencing.

One thing that really helped me in those roles was I became a member of our executive committee about a year into my time at Capital Dynamics. It gave me a voice in the strategic initiatives of the firm and allowed me to form very strong relationships with investment and business development sales leaders. That still helps today in garnering support when I want to introduce any initiatives into the business.

In terms of my focuses back then, one was to leverage technology to enable legal and compliance to keep pace with our rapid growth. We’ve since adopted digital or web-based solutions for e-signatures, processing NDAs and subscription booklets, compliance management and employee reporting. A lot of that has accelerated over the last few years, especially with the availability of cloud-based solutions which have proliferated during this time.

I also oversaw a big extension of our compliance function to

AHMAD BIO

In addition to her chief operating officer role at Capital Dynamics, Hina also served as acting CFO for the business between January and September 2020. She took over from Emma Anderson who had stepped down from the role, until a permanent replacement, Ben Wiseman joined the firm as CFO.

new geographies, through Europe, the Middle East and parts of the US where we weren’t previously active. On the legal side, I also led a number of significant corporate transactions and restructurings. They were a fantastic opportunity for me to contribute to the success of the firm. I think they were critical as a stepping stone to my current role, and these types of initiatives continue to be a big part of my role as COO.

TDD: How much interaction and input do you still have with the legal and compliance teams?

HA: We still work hand-in-hand. The legal and compliance team is at the heart of so many initiatives, not just operational, but strategic. And given that regulatory burden is continually increasing, we have a very sophisticated legal and compliance team to handle that.

TDD: How much input do you have regarding the firm’s digital transformation?

HA: IT is one of the areas I oversee. I work very closely with our head of IT on our digital transformation strategy. In fact, I don’t consider it a transformation, it’s more of an evolution because we’re constantly evolving to meet the enormous challenges of a business like ours. We’re constantly working to safeguard our clients’ data and eliminate cyber threats to our business.

TDD: Capital Dynamics has 13 global offices. How do you ensure operational efficiency across so many locations?

HA: On a corporate level we operate globally, meaning we typically have a high degree of coordination among our offices. We value input from our local offices enormously and push decision-making down to the local level where possible. It’s the local leaders and teams that are best positioned to understand their local market and client needs.

With respect to our EMT and sub-committees, they continue to evolve along with the state of the pandemic. We’ll be transitioning our internally focused EMT committee into more of a Capital Dynamics culture committee which ensures we continue to have a strong and cohesive culture. We believe it’s a key driver to our success. Our externally focused sub-committee will continue to operate with our client relations team on mandates to ensure the level of transparency and communication we’ve established continues in the future.

TDD: What are your key focuses over the next six to 12 months?

HA: ESG is a real focus here at Capital Dynamics. I think within the next 12 months and beyond, it’s only going to become more so.

Additionally, the digital evolution journey is never over. I’d say that continues to be a key focus. We are serving very sophisticated clients in global markets. That means meeting their specific requirements and staying ahead of the game when it comes to giving them easy access to their investment information. For example, we’re going to continue to invest in client services. We’re expecting to make a big announcement about some interesting client portal improvements we have coming up. Client service is key to maintaining our position in the market so it will always continue to be a key focus for us. ♦

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TIMELINE

