

April 23, 2021

April Isaacson: Rising Above, Instructions Not Included

Sidebars Episode 3 Show Notes

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[April Abele Isaacson](#) has 25 years of experience as a trial lawyer and a registered United States patent attorney. Before starting her legal career, April earned a MS in Pharmacological and Physiological Sciences and was an HIV/AIDS research scientist at Boston Children's Hospital. This technical background plays a significant role in her success as a patent litigator who focuses her practice on pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and chemical patent litigation, particularly on behalf of drug innovators. Her patent litigation experience includes trying cases in several federal district courts throughout the United States, as well as appeals before the Federal Circuit, representing both plaintiffs and defendants. April also counsels biopharma companies on patent and related regulatory issues, including patent portfolio strategy, litigation preparation and strategy, licensing, patent term extension strategy, and Orange Book patent listing and Use Code strategy. April's experience also includes a 5-year stint as in-house counsel at a public specialty pharmaceutical company, and serving as a U.S. Navy JAG Corps prosecutor where she won several high-profile jury cases and earned multiple achievement medals and letters of commendation for superior service and leadership.

April's career is a truly her own creation, and her success is built on grit, tenacity, and love of learning. At every turn, she bet on herself and did the hard work that opened new doors. In this episode, April shares her journey and the forces that shaped her life and her career – from mental illness in her family to a changing political landscape in the country to the crucible of serving in the Navy. She also shares how determination and focusing on being her best self allowed her to build a bespoke career that fits her perfectly and that she loves – a career that didn't come with an instruction manual.

Highlights include:

- Why 1984 was the perfect year to attend a Seven Sisters college (2:00)
- Embracing culture shock (4:35)
- Finding your tribe (6:38)
- Leaving it all on the (track-and-)field (7:42)
- Spurning an athletic scholarship (10:13)
- The invaluable support of others when there's no family support to lean on (12:14)



- How Shirley Chisholm derailed plans for medical school (15:06)
- Letting go of other people's dreams and expectations and finding your own (20:53)
- Creating a Masters degree in a school that doesn't award them (24:16)
- Hello, law school, Hello Nashville (27:42)
- Growing as a leader and a litigator through the Navy JAG Corp experience (30:43)
- Cross-country and cross-careers: the move to California and to patent litigation (37:21)
- The generational shift from women competing against each other to a collaborative, symbiotic approach (42:27)
- Getting ahead in life does not require a "sharp elbows" mentality (45:45)