

SOTD: Uncharacteristic Careers

00;00;01;02 - 00;00;23;28

Justin

Welcome to Side of the Desk. I'm your host, Justin. And today we're going to have a conversation with two guests that I am so excited to introduce you to. We're going to be talking about uncharacteristic careers that exist here at Fidelity. Traditionally, in financial services, you wouldn't think that we have some of the jobs that we're going to introduce you to today.

00;00;23;29 - 00;00;36;17

Justin

So at this point, I'd like to welcome our guests, Jacki and Sasha. Jacki. Sasha, if you could introduce yourself to our listeners and tell them your title and what you do at Fidelity. We'd love to get started.

00;00;36;19 - 00;01;08;06

Sasha

I'm Sasha and I'm the art collection education and outreach manager. So Fidelity, a lot of people don't realize that Fidelity has a 12,000 piece contemporary art collection. And has a team on staff that manages that collection very much like a museum. And because we know that contemporary art often needs some explanation and some background. My job is to give that information and make sure people have everything they need to be able to appreciate the collection.

00;01;08;09 - 00;01;38;13

Jackie

My name's Jacki Redmond and I'm community relations manager at Fidelity, and I've been in this role for a little over two years. So our community relations team builds meaningful nonprofit and school partnerships and all with the goal of provide access and opportunity to underserved communities with a specific focus on black and brown youth. So in my role, I'm meeting with internal partners.

00;01;38;13 - 00;01;56;04

Jackie

I'm meeting with community partners to understand the needs of both and then think about how we might leverage resources to support the community, whether that's through volunteerism, whether that's through dollars, in-kind donations or other means.

00;01;56;06 - 00;02;19;17

Justin

Wow. So I think our audience is probably sitting here thinking, how did Fidelity come up with two of these jobs that are so unique and different? And again, not something you expect to see at a financial services firm? My next question for you both would be how did you end up in these roles? So, Jacki, maybe we can start with you this time.

00;02;19;18 - 00;02;25;23

Justin

What was your career path to getting to Fidelity, and were you surprised that such a role like this existed here?

00;02;25;26 - 00;03;01;14

Jackie

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Great question. So I my career actually started in the nonprofit sector. So I went to business school in Boston and for undergrad and where a lot of my colleagues were going into finance or for profit roles. I was drawn to having a career driven by purpose, so I knew that working for an organization that had a strong mission that aligned with my values was important for me.

00;03;01;15 - 00;03;41;23

Jackie

So I actually started my career with three years of AmeriCorps Vista in AmeriCorps. Vista is a national service program where you live at the poverty level and support nonprofit organizations and building their capacity. So it was an interesting first three years, and I learned how to be quite frugal and thrifty. But after I graduated from that, graduated after I completed my three years of service with AmeriCorps Vista, one of the benefits of that program is they provide a scholarship to continue your education.

00;03;41;25 - 00;04;12;16

Jackie

So I actually went to business school again and got my MBA from Brandeis University with a specific focus on social impact management. And I knew I was really interested in thinking about how sectors can work together to support communities and align on needs so that, you know, there's a business or a higher education benefit and also a community benefit.

00;04;12;19 - 00;04;47;09

Jackie

So after my MBA degree, I ended up exploring opportunities in the for profit nonprofit intersection, and I worked for an organization called Common Impact in Brooklyn, New York, that supports companies in developing skills based volunteering programs. And one of my company partners was Fidelity, who I was supporting their community relations team with skills based volunteering, thinking about how Fidelity can leverage the talent and expertise of its associates to support the community.

00;04;47;12 - 00;05;03;24

Jackie

And about six or seven years after working for Common Impact, I made the leap to join fidelity and support both the skills base falling volunteering work, but other community relations work from the Fidelity side.

00;05;03;26 - 00;05;07;05

Justin

Amazing. Sasha, tell us a little bit about your journey to Fidelity.

00;05;07;08 - 00;05;30;22

Sasha

Sure. Well, I have a undergraduate degree in studio art, which I always like to say is the least practical of all the majors. And I realized at a certain point that I like talking about art more than I liked making it. So as I was graduating college, I was sort of just applying to any kind of arts job I could find.

00;05;30;22 - 00;05;59;07

Sasha

And I was assuming that, like Jacki, I would end up in the nonprofit sector because that's where a lot of arts jobs are. But immediately after college, I got a job in an art gallery in Boston where I

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worked for about a year. And while I was there, I met a curator who works for another corporate art collection at Wellington Management, where they have a smaller art collection, but also a very excellent grouping of artworks.

00;05;59;09 - 00;06;25;26

Sasha

And I ended up getting hired there and working there for a couple years, doing kind of administrative work, registrar's work, which is like a fancy art world term for, I like to say registrars are like librarians for art. They kind of keep a database on all the art in the collection. They manage all of the records, do conditioning work, make shipping arrangements and things like that for artwork.

00;06;25;28 - 00;06;52;21

Sasha

So I did that job until the market crashed in 2008, and a lot of companies did away with their art staff at that time. So that's when I did go and work in the nonprofit sector, and I worked at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem for a few years, but I had made some really excellent connections in the corporate art world while I was at Wellington, including meeting some of the team that was working at Fidelity.

00;06;52;23 - 00;07;12;28

Sasha

So after a few years in the museum world, I ended up coming back to the corporate art world. And in 2011 I started at Fidelity also as a registrar. One of the things about working in the art world, especially early in your career, is that you kind of have to be prepared to do any kind of work and you get your foot in the door.

00;07;12;28 - 00;07;38;14

Sasha

You take whatever job you can, and then you can kind of maneuver your way to the job that you want. So I was thrilled to get my foot in the door at Fidelity. I wasn't necessarily in the position that I wanted to be in ultimately, but I was able to start working with the collection. And as I had hoped, I eventually got into the education and communications role that I'm in now, which is really my sweet spot.

00;07;38;16 - 00;07;51;28

Justin

Thank you. I appreciate you both sharing that. Talk to me about some of your favorite projects that you've worked on and if you could tell our audience, how does it impact the company? So, Jacki, why don't we start with you.

00;07;52;00 - 00;08;24;26

Jackie

Sure. I always feel so great in my role when I'm able to make the meaningful connection to a nonprofit that benefits both the company and the community. So at Fidelity, we have very engaged associates and business units. And one of my favorite projects actually has happened recently. Over the last year, one of our business units has been intentional, intentional about going deep with a nonprofit partner.

00;08;24;28 - 00;08;59;14

Jackie

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So developing a deep relationship that supports this partner in many different ways. So we've held meetings to understand the nonprofit needs, and then we consider at the business unit level how they can work together to support those needs, whether that's through raising funds or whether that's through volunteering. And this year, the business unit actually started a new intern program over the summer, and they wanted to work specifically with this nonprofit organization.

00;08;59;17 - 00;09;21;26

Jackie

And they're bringing on three summer interns for Fidelity. And that partnership and just the level of community and student support that we are able to provide this one organization is such a highlight of this work and just shows how much of a deep partnership and potential for impact that can happen between the business and the nonprofit sectors.

00;09;21;29 - 00;09;24;03

Justin

Awesome. Sasha, let's go to you.

00;09;24;05 - 00;09;53;24

Sasha

Well, one of the things that really drives me in my career is the belief that art is for everyone. But one of the tricky things about contemporary art is that it can be hard to understand. You can't often understand everything about a piece just by looking at it. And so the thing that gets me really passionate about working with the collection is being able to provide the information to associates and anyone who's viewing our art so that they can appreciate the artwork.

00;09;53;24 - 00;10;20;12

Sasha

And ultimately, I hope so that they can realize a passion in themselves for art that will go outside of their job and they might go to a local museum or become a patron of the arts in their community. But the challenge, of course, is how do I reach 70,000 employees at Fidelity when I'm only one person? So one of the projects that I feel most passionate about and excited about in my role at Fidelity is our art Ambassador program.

00;10;20;15 - 00;10;54;11

Sasha

This is a program modeled after the museum docent experience. So essentially we recruit and train really passionate employees to give tours of the artwork in their sites. It started back in 2016, 2017, and we had just a few volunteer employees that we were working with. And it's grown over the years. And now today we have about 50 employee volunteers working across, I think 16 different locations, both domestically and internationally at Fidelity.

00;10;54;13 - 00;11;18;29

Sasha

And they're really at the core of our program. They're kind of the face of the collection and provide a ton of really important information to our employees and sometimes to clients as well about the collection. And they're also so enthusiastic and amazing that it's just been a joy working with like minded art lovers.

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Justin

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That's awesome. Since you're both in such uncharacteristic roles and careers in terms of some of the traditional jobs that we see at financial services companies, what are some of the misconceptions about your role? Sasha, let's start with you this time.

00;11;34;20 - 00;11;55;13

Sasha

Good question. I think one of the misconceptions has to do more with art and less with my role specifically. But my role certainly intersects with this misconception. And that's when people say to me, Oh, I'm not really into art, or I don't get that. That's not for me. And, you know, I really think of art as a vehicle for talking about the world.

00;11;55;14 - 00;12;21;04

Sasha

It's just a way of thinking about everything that's going on around us. So I feel like one of the challenges and one of the exciting things about my job is getting to prove people wrong when they tell me that by giving them information or showing them pieces of artwork that they connect with and that they see themselves, then I think I can sort of show that art is a mode of self-expression that anyone can connect to.

00;12;21;06 - 00;12;25;02

Justin

Jackie, Tell us about a misconception about your job role here at Fidelity.

00;12;25;05 - 00;12;59;10

Jackie

Well, do and I love that answer. You're making me, like, passionate about art, and I have to look into this program now. So thank you for that. You know, our community relations team, we have regional managers in on the ground in most of the sites where fidelity has a physical presence and a physical physical office. We also have an enterprise wide team where we work on our community relations strategy across the firm.

00;12;59;10 - 00;13;36;01

Jackie

And I think one of the misconceptions of our community relations team is that we're solely focused on volunteerism and and that's not to say that volunteerism isn't a large resource and tool that we're able to leverage to support the community. It just means, you know, our community relations team does a lot more. And and one of our leaders actually says that we lead with, you know, relationships over over tasks.

00;13;36;01 - 00;14;00;08

Jackie

And I think that's so true with every one of our community relations managers and community relations team members. We're a small but mighty team, but we meet with nonprofit and school partners in our communities to really have a pulse check on community needs. And then on the flip side of that, we meet with Fidelity stakeholders to have a pulse check on our internal partner needs.

00;14;00;08 - 00;14;31;17

Jackie

And then we work hard as a team to be thoughtful. Connectors leading with community need first to create reciprocal partnerships. So sometimes that's supporting through volunteerism.

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Other times it's that example I gave earlier about the the interns we're getting from a nonprofit organization. So we really lead with relationships and follow with tasks and are really those those touch points both for the needs internally and externally and how we can connect them.

00;14;31;24 - 00;14;54;17

Justin

Sure, that makes sense. And I think, you know, just hearing both of your answers, I have such a great appreciation for what you both do, and it sounds amazing just to have that passion that you both have. I can tell how you must bring that to your jobs every day when you show up. But that leads me to ask you, what are some of the challenges that you face in your jobs day to day, especially in such unique careers?

00;14;54;19 - 00;14;56;08

Justin

Let's start with you, Sasha.

00;14;56;11 - 00;15;26;28

Sasha

Well, I think one of the biggest challenges of presenting art in a corporate setting is just that you're you're presenting art to an audience that's not seeking out an art experience. So it's not like working at a museum where people are coming because they're already bought into the idea of doing art. So here at Fidelity, we really have to think about our audience and think about the fact that they're here for a purpose that is different than art viewing and curate for them and for that experience.

00;15;26;28 - 00;15;53;23

Sasha

And then I think it's an additional challenge to think about how to best provide them information and the kinds of experiences they want to have with the art where they can learn more. But at the same time, that challenge also provides this wonderful opportunity because, you know, when you're working at a museum, everyone's already pretty bought in to the idea of art as an important asset versus working in a corporate setting.

00;15;53;23 - 00;16;22;05

Sasha

Some people may not be museum visitors. They may not be people who think they like art. And I have this amazing opportunity to kind of convert them and show them that they that art is wonderful and that it's something they can pursue outside of their time at work as well. So I sort of both love and hate the challenge

00;16;22;07 - 00;16;55;25

Jackie

And, you know, on my side on the community relations theme, I think, and this was a challenge I felt in the nonprofit sector. So I'd say it's similar to any any role where you're supporting the community is that it can be difficult when you're not able to support every partner or you're not able to support every community need. And on our community relations team, which is, you know, within any company in this role, we realistically have limited resources and time that we really need to be intentional about aligning our resources and time to our mission.

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00;16;55;25 - 00;17;18;07

Jackie

So, you know, I think it's a challenge when you're in a conversation with a partner and you want to be able to support a need you're hearing, but you also have to balance business priorities. And that's just something that's unique to being in these intersectional roles where you're not only supporting the business, but you're supporting external partners.

00;17;18;07 - 00;17;35;28

Justin

To tell me about, one of your favorite things about working for Fidelity in this role is it's specific to the company. Is there a certain way that Fidelity has supported each of you in your career as you are in such amazing roles? Jackie May, we can start with you.

00;17;36;01 - 00;18;00;26

Jackie

Sure. So I think there's a few things I love about being in this role and being in this role specifically at Fidelity. One of them, you know, being in this community relations space, and one of the intentional reasons why I wanted to work at the intersection of the for profit and the nonprofit sector is because there's so much impact that can be made.

00;18;01;03 - 00;18;26;21

Jackie

When you think about fidelity and its 70,000 associates and our team gets to create ways to civically engaged these associates and to think of ways for them to support the community. And that's just such a privilege to be in that position. And then, you know, working specifically at Fidelity, there's so many careers. That's what this podcast is about, right?

00;18;26;21 - 00;18;58;25

Jackie

There's so many different career paths you can take. And, you know, when I think about, you know, my family, so I have a 14 month old, I am just so thankful for the benefits we have and also just the ability to see yourself at Fidelity long term, whether it's within your current role or outside of your current role, you're really encouraged to think about mobility and your next move.

00;18;58;28 - 00;19;21;14

Jackie

And it's refreshing to me that I can think about, Wow, I could be at Fidelity my entire career, which feels wild and, you know, wasn't what I was experiencing in the nonprofit sector.

00;19;21;16 - 00;19;49;12

Sasha

And for me, I mean, on a broad scale, I feel so lucky to work for a company that so values the arts and culture the way that Fidelity does. It's an incredible differentiator between Fidelity and other companies that we have this 12,000 piece art collection and that we have staff that manages the collection. You do sometimes see art in other corporate spaces, but it's really, really rare that it's part of a cohesive, mission driven collection. And it's even rarer to find staff that is working on that collection and maintaining it and providing resources around it.

00;19;49;15 - 00;20;16;08

Sasha

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And Fidelity is pumping money back into the cultural economies where we have a business presence. So we really support local artists, local framers, local installers, and as a former nonprofit worker, it just warms my heart that we are having that kind of community impact. And on a more personal level, my career at Fidelity has really been marked by the ability to sort of craft the job that I want to have.

00;20;16;10 - 00;20;47;28

Sasha

Like I mentioned earlier, I started in a completely different role than the one I work in now, still working with the collection, but doing very different work. But I always knew that my passion and my interest was in education and communications around art, and we didn't really do that. When I began 12 and a half years ago, we kind of just presented the artwork and we didn't have the resources to give you more information, but I sort of saw that the need was there, and so I did the job I was hired to do, but I was always given the freedom to do additional things.

00;20;47;28 - 00;21;15;03

Sasha

And I think originally I sort of started a little blog as a side project, and then I started offering small tours in my local office and it just kind of grew and grew from there and nobody ever told me to stop. Everyone was thrilled for me to keep building and keep experimenting. And I think that's one of the really wonderful things about working at Fidelity is that there's so much opportunity to craft the career you want to have.

00;21;15;06 - 00;21;41;18

Justin

Love that love the way you put that. And I totally agree. That's something that, you know, not only have I experienced, but I've heard come through from various guests that we've hosted on this podcast. Last question that I'm going to ask each of you to answer for us, and this is something that I really look forward to asking of our guests from episode to episode is what's a piece of career advice that you would give to somebody out there any age, any situation?

00;21;41;18 - 00;22;01;02

Justin

But, you know, they're looking to do something a little bit more unique or a little bit more uncharacteristic in the working world. And maybe they're having trouble finding that role or even discovering what it is that they want to do that's a little bit different. What's a piece of advice you would give somebody in a position like that?

00;22;01;05 - 00;22;03;06

Justin

And Jackie, let's start with you.

00;22;03;09 - 00;22;38;27

Jackie

Sure. So first I'll answer more broadly and then I'll answer specifically related to a career in community relations. But I think my biggest advices don't be afraid to take risks and from personal experience, you know, there was a point in my career at an impact when I was living in New York City where I decided to go part time in my role at Common Impact because I was also a fitness instructor and I wanted to build out that side of my career.

00;22;39;00 - 00;23;17;24

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Jackie

But then the pandemic hit, and in New York City, we were hit particularly hard, and I wasn't able to pursue that side of my career anymore. And that that risk that I took and that shift showed me that stability is quite important for my career, especially as I'm thinking about growing a family. So that was one of the building blocks of, you know, bringing me to Fidelity, because that's what triggered me looking for a place where I really can grow a career within that community relations and community support space.

00;23;17;26 - 00;23;41;06

Jackie

And then for anyone looking to join a community relations team, it can be sometimes tricky to find a path into a community relations role at a company, community relations teams, and sometimes they're not even called that community relations. You know, that's what they're called at Fidelity. But they can they're often, you know, on the smaller side and small but mighty groups.

00;23;41;08 - 00;24;04;12

Jackie

But I will say that nonprofit experience, whether that's volunteerism, whether that's sitting on a board or, you know, any way to get nonprofit sector experience can really help you, help set you up for success in this role.

00;24;04;14 - 00;24;28;23

Sasha

And I think I'm going to copy Jackie's approach to this question and answer more broadly and then more specifically to a role in the arts. But broadly, I would say don't be too limited by what your job title is at any given time. I really have, I think, made most of the leaps in my career by just doing other stuff in addition to what my job title says I'm supposed to be doing, and then building upon that other stuff to get myself to new or different positions.

00;24;28;25 - 00;24;49;13

Sasha

So I would encourage people to, you know, if they're passionate about an area outside of their job role, see how they can get involved in that or even get involved in groups like Fidelity has these amazing employee resource groups. And that's a way to get involved outside of your job role in something that's really key to Fidelity's culture.

00;24;49;16 - 00;25;10;13

Sasha

But I would say specifically to jobs in the arts, especially for those young people just starting their careers, I would encourage you to be scrappy. I would encourage you to take any job you can get in the arts world and then work your way into the job you want to have because arts jobs are so hard to get.

00;25;10;13 - 00;25;32;23

Sasha

I feel so incredibly lucky that I've had the privilege to spend my career working in the arts. It's something that can be really hard to achieve and often is due to a lot of luck and kind of knowing the right people and making the right connections and networking. So you just got to get your foot in the door and then meet as many people as you can.

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00;25;32;25 - 00;25;50;14

Justin

Hear that lesson and be scrappy. Go for the job that you want. Don't be afraid to take chances and you can end up in not only an uncharacteristic career, but something really rewarding. They would love to do. We're hiring here at Fidelity. If you want to check out our open roles, you can go to Fidelity Careers dot com.

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Justin

You can also follow us across social media at Fidelity Jobs. I want to thank you listeners for tuning into this episode of Side of the Desk and a special thank you to both Sasha and Jacki for joining us and sharing their inspirational stories and telling us a little bit about their day to day in their unique, unexpected careers.

00;26;11;20 - 00;26;12;11

Justin

Thanks, everyone.