

Loni A. Mahanta

Legal & Policy Executive

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Loni is a strategic Regulatory, Legal and Policy Executive whose visionary leadership helps businesses craft winning strategies when Industries face uncertainty. Her focus on agility, resilience and growth empowers organizations to consider the legal, regulatory, and policy landscapes in which they operate. Loni is known for skillfully simplifying the intricacies of business engagement in public policy for any audience — from the gig economy to proptech to web3/crypto regulation. She helps management teams strengthen their collaboration with external constituents through successful engagement plans for interactions with elected officials, community groups, and the media. Loni currently serves on the Board of Directors of HopSkipDrive (HSD), a vehicle-for-hire company that partners with school districts to serve student transportation needs.

Experience

OpenSea.io 2022 - present
Vice President, Policy & Government Affairs

Creating and leading the policy and government affairs team at OpenSea, the world's largest NFT marketplace, focusing on educating policymakers about NFTs and web3 more broadly, and fostering dialog about thoughtful regulation that will still permit growth of this burgeoning industry.

Brookings Institution 2021 - present
Nonresident Fellow, Economic Studies

Fellowship in the Economic Studies department of the Brookings Institution, focusing on tech policy and emerging tech. Member of the internal Brookings working group focusing on regulation and policy in the crypto/blockchain/web3 space.

Zillow Group 2021 - 2022
Vice President, Government Relations and Public Policy

Led the government relations and public policy team, working to modernize the legal and regulatory structure around commercial real estate transactions to provide a seamless digital experience for consumers. Led a team of 19 public policy and government relations professionals, and a budget of \$5M.

Lyft, Inc., San Francisco, CA 2015 - 2021
Vice President, Policy Development & Research 2019 - 2021

Recruited by Chief Policy Officer Anthony Foxx to craft strategic solutions for the business's core policy issues and drove operational and programmatic priorities. Managed experts in sustainability, safety, privacy, future of work, labor policy, legislative analysis, policy research, and analytics, combining data analysis and legal acumen to create effective political strategy and drive high-value business outcomes across verticals. In addition to the duties of this role, Loni also continued to lead Lyft's keystone "Future of Work" initiative, serving as the principal strategist on worker issues at Lyft and the gig economy at-large.

- **Business and Political Leadership:** Served as the Lead negotiator with the California Governor's office, the California Legislature, and the Labor Movement on AB5, an industry-defining bill addressing worker classification. The first to envision and articulate the effects of this change on Lyft's business and to drive awareness of driver misclassification as the main external challenge facing the company and the U.S. workforce at-large. Also the primary driver of company-wide preparations for adapting the entire ridesharing business model to varying regulatory structures. Integral to the creation of Lyft's first ESG report.
- **Policy Considerations for Product, Business Operations, and Comms:** Guided integration of Policy objectives at Lyft, quantifying business opportunities and risk presented by policy changes and negotiating in favor of Lyft's strategic priorities. Drove the integration of Policy considerations into proactive Product strategy and long-term planning. Advised around comms and policy implications of action and inaction regarding external affairs. Created and drove "rapid response" decision-making processes across Lyft, addressing complex, multi-department issues. Drove privacy policy initiatives, such as reconciling data sharing practices across teams and understanding the implications of new privacy legislation. Integral player in crisis communication responses to pressing Legal and Policy matters.
- **Safety Policy Prioritization:** Worked closely with Product (Safety) and VPs of Comms, Legal, Operations, Product, Engineering, Compliance, and Science to deliver a comprehensive, rigorous, high-quality, and impactful safety strategy for Lyft across multiple lines of business and modes of transportation. Developed Lyft's strategies and practices across road and traffic safety, interpersonal safety, health safety and women's safety. Worked closely with Policy, Communications, and Marketing teams to develop Lyft's safety policy positions, support research plans, and build impactful programs with external partners and balance limited product resources to create the safest possible platform.
- **Sustainability:** Led team that drove buy-in and adoption of Lyft's industry-leading environmental pivot from carbon offsets to 100% electric vehicles (EVs) by 2030. Led internal cross-functional efforts to build a plan for compliance with commitment. Externally, secured endorsements from 3rd-party validators and identified and neutralized potential criticism to build public trust, resulting in over 100 media placements with "exceptionally positive headlines."
- **Policy Research:** Led team of research scientists in solving business problems with "big data" at Lyft. Worked cross-functionally to establish public-facing reportable metrics, including driver hourly earnings, carbon emissions, and all the data included in the annual [Lyft Economic Impact Report](#). Directed team in designing large operational datasets for use by academics and governments with the goal of building trust between Lyft and the general public and exhibiting the major economic impacts of the ridesharing industry at-large.
- **Legislative Analysis:** Managed a team that reviewed, evaluated, and drafted federal, state, and local legislation, identified legislative trends, developed strategies, and crafted policy language to further Lyft's interests. Worked with Lyft's Compliance, Legal, and Operations teams as new regulatory frameworks were implemented and collaborated with Policy team members on legislative efforts.

Vice President, Future of Work

2018 – 2019

Pitched and architected this industry-leading initiative focused on policy and thought leadership in the "future of work" space. Reported to co-founder John Zimmer and drove innovations in labor policy, portable benefits, the creation of a modern, flexible safety net, worker voice, and addressing worker displacement due to automation.

*Vice President, Associate General Counsel
Managing Counsel, Employment & Litigation*

2015 – 2018

Reporting to the General Counsel, responsible for all labor and employment-related issues facing Lyft, internally (employees) and externally (drivers).

- **Labor and Employment Litigation:** Oversaw all aspects of employment-related litigation and claims, including civil lawsuits (including those alleging employment misclassification of drivers), and audits by city, state, and federal agencies. Led strategy on all labor issues arising from driver contractor status, including actions before the National Labor Relations Board and the Internal Revenue Service and novel city efforts to permit collective bargaining by independent contractors. Led settlement of *Cotter v. Lyft*, a California employment misclassification suit with exposure in the hundreds of millions of dollars.
- **Product Counseling:** Led all product counseling related to the independent contractor status of drivers. Created training for product managers to understand do's and don'ts of employment law and drove proactive changes with product to mitigate Legal risk.
- **Public Market Readiness:** Deeply involved in preparing the company to go public. Helped draft the employment and litigation section of Lyft's S-1.
- **Management:** Managed and oversaw outside counsel, including development of litigation strategies across multiple jurisdictions and management of legal budget of \$10M. Managed seven in-house attorneys and three paralegals.
- **Executive Advising:** Advising the executive team on high-impact litigation, audits, strategic partnerships, and acquisitions. Advised on high profile on-boarding of executives, executive compensation, and high profile investigations and terminations. Partnered with the People team on the full breadth of internal employment matters.

Folger Levin LLP

Associate, Litigation, Labor, and Employment

San Francisco, CA

2011 – 2014

Crowell & Moring LLP

Associate, Litigation

San Francisco, CA

2009 – 2011

Folger Levin & Kahn LLP

Associate, Litigation

San Francisco, CA

2007 – 2009

Education

University of California, Hastings College of the Law, Juris Doctor, *magna cum laude*

2007

Membership: Order of the Coif, Thurston Society

Admissions: State Bar of California, December 2007

Stanford University, Bachelor of Arts, International Relations

2003

Board Service

HopSkipDrive, Inc.

Member, Board of Directors

2021 - present

Family Violence Appellate Project

Member, Board of Directors

2018 - present