



FORWARD MOMENTUM

Meredith Perkins Plays Key Role in World's Largest Car Rental Company

JOE ANGELES

Meredith Perkins, JD '96, vice president, corporate counsel, and assistant secretary of Enterprise Holdings, the largest rental car company in the world, is a generalist involved with every spoke of her corporation's large wheel. "I feel like everyone at Enterprise is my client," says Perkins, who was critical in helping with the acquisition of Alamo and National.

IT WAS GETTING LATE. Enterprise Rent-A-Car Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Andrew Taylor wanted to close the deal on August 1, 2007. Here it was the Fourth of July, and Meredith Perkins, then one of just three corporate attorneys for Enterprise, hadn't yet gotten approval for the acquisition from the Canadian Competition Bureau.

The deal was an acquisition of Oklahoma-based Vanguard Group to add its rental brands National and Alamo to the Enterprise portfolio. Perkins was in charge of securing Canadian rights and U.S. antitrust approval from the U.S. Federal Trade Commission.

"I believed we could explain the transaction more easily in person," Perkins recalls. "So, I gathered a number of our business specialists and flew with them to Ottawa. We sat down with the Canadian Competition Bureau and worked through any questions or concerns."

The personal connection worked, and before summer's end, the acquisition was complete.

Today, Perkins is vice president, corporate counsel, and assistant secretary of Enterprise Holdings. She is actively involved with some 2,300 employees at corporate headquarters, as well as with more than 63,000 field employees at Enterprise's 45 regional subsidiaries throughout the country.

In her various roles, she handles everything from tax, compliance, legislative, and regulatory concerns to leasing, truck, airport, contractual, corporate account, insurance replacement, corporate record, and environmental issues. She also supervises three of the department's lawyers and has played a key role in the past several years in restructuring and integration efforts after the Alamo and National purchase.

Enterprise, which Perkins joined in 2004, is family-owned (Andrew Taylor's father, Jack Taylor, founded it in 1957 with just seven vehicles) and locally grown. In fiscal year 2012, its various businesses accounted for \$15.4 billion in revenue and operated 1.3 million vehicles worldwide.

Perkins' willingness to become involved and immerse herself in diverse scenarios can be seen early on, in a key childhood experience. Her parents, law alumni Alwyn Wolfarth, BSBA '59, JD '63, LL.M. '68, and Mary Lou Shelton Wolfarth, AB '59, MA '60, JD '64, sent their only child to Costa Rica when she was 14. Through the American Field Services program, Perkins lived with a family in the tiny pueblo of Liberia for three months.

"I think they wanted to be sure that I would be independent," Perkins says. "I cried the first day when I couldn't find a

Meredith Perkins is actively involved with some 2,300 employees at corporate headquarters and with more than 63,000 field employees at Enterprise's 45 regional subsidiaries.

pay phone to beg them to bring me home. And I cried the last day when I didn't want to leave my host family. I learned to become a part of another culture and acquire new experiences."

Perkins next honed her interests through a dual degree in psychology and Spanish at the University of Vermont, with the intent of pursuing a graduate degree in psychology. However, after an illuminating year working as a paralegal at a Washington, D.C. firm, she decided to enroll in law school, which brought her home to St. Louis.

Perkins credits her involvement with the Student Bar Association (SBA) as the experience that showed her the importance of going beyond the routine to dig a little deeper and get things done. Vice president of SBA by her third year, Perkins "got to know professors personally outside of class as they helped SBA members achieve goals." She adds: "That connectivity was educational and also a lot of fun."



▲ Meredith Perkins, left, with Pam Nicholson, president of Enterprise Holdings

After graduation, she began her career as a product liability litigator with Thompson Coburn in St. Louis. Five years later, she became one of two in-house attorneys at the Missouri American Water Company.

The variety of her current work at Enterprise is rewarding and taps into her international interests. The company now has a presence in 39 countries worldwide, including 8,200 corporate-owned and franchise locations, as well as a strategic investment in China.

True to her nature, Perkins also believes in making a difference through connections locally. She serves on the boards of the Service Bureau and the Women's Exchange, two organizations that seek to enable economic opportunities for area families. In recognition of her activities, Perkins received a regional economic development award from the Winning Women organization in April 2012.

Among her other roles, she was a gubernatorial-appointed board member of the Missouri Arts Council & Cultural Trust in 2005–12 and a delegate to the Republican National Convention in 2008.

Perkins and her husband, Peter, EMBA '12, are both strong believers in a legacy of giving back. Perkins often brings daughters, Campbell, 9, and Lambert, 11, to volunteering events. "I value my time with my kids, and doing that together lets them see how fulfilling volunteering can be."