

Christine Spadafor: Crafting a Career of Impact

Episode Summary

Raised to believe she could be anything, Christine Spadafor has done almost everything, including being a competitive ice-skater and American Junior Miss contestant. Christine's passion for knowledge has led her to pursue education and experiences in many forms but her desire to help people has caused healthcare to a strong theme throughout. While her deep background in healthcare helped her through a difficult time, it has been her indomitable spirit and intellectual restlessness that has really powered Christine's incredible journey, in this episode of *The Sydcast*.

Syd Finkelstein

[Syd Finkelstein](#) is the Steven Roth Professor of Management at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College. He holds a Master's degree from the London School of Economics and a Ph.D. from Columbia University. Professor Finkelstein has published 25 books and 90 articles, including the bestsellers [Why Smart Executives Fail](#) and [Superbosses: How Exceptional Leaders Master the Flow of Talent](#), which LinkedIn Chairman Reid Hoffman calls the "leadership guide for the Networked Age." He is also a Fellow of the Academy of Management, a consultant and speaker to leading companies around the world, and a top 25 on the Global Thinkers 50 list of top management gurus. Professor Finkelstein's research and consulting work often relies on in-depth and personal interviews with hundreds of people, an experience that led him to create and host his own podcast, [The Sydcast](#), to uncover and share the stories of all sorts of fascinating people in business, sports, entertainment, politics, academia, and everyday life.

Christine Spadafor

Christine J. Spadafor is an experienced public and private company board director with deep expertise in risk management, regulatory compliance, and ESG. She has a demonstrated track record leading successful large-scale transformational initiatives at the intersection of strategy, operations, finance, and change management in both domestic and global markets across a broad spectrum of industries.

Christine is CEO of SpadaforClay Group, a management consulting firm. She serves as an Independent Director on the boards of highly regulated companies: Chair of Governance and Nominating Committee and member of the audit committee of Boyd Gaming, Chair of Quality and Compliance Committee of Kindred at Home, and she serves on the advisory board WBUR, a premier National Public Radio station. She is

also a regular commentator on the BBC World Service “Business Matters” global radio broadcast and podcast.

For nearly 10 years, Christine dedicated her extensive experience in financial, operational, and organizational management to [St. Jude's Ranch for Children](#) — a nationally recognized nonprofit that cares for homeless and abused children — and led an innovative turnaround that received national acclaim.

A graduate of Harvard Law School and the Harvard School of Public Health, Christine was selected by the Business Section of the American Bar Association/Direct Women as one of the top 20 female attorneys with outstanding expertise for corporate board service. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, she co-authored a workplace health treatise that was published by Johns Hopkins University. She is a lecturer on Strategic Leadership in the Visiting Executive Program at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth University, a lecturer at the Harvard Kennedy School of Business, and is a frequent speaker addressing board governance topics and “Women in Leadership” topics.

Christine has been awarded two Doctor of Humane Letters degrees — received in recognition of her professional accomplishments and lifelong contributions to vulnerable and at-risk populations.

~~Christine Spadafor is an accomplished chief executive officer, management consultant, and Board of Directors advisor — serving as an independent director for Boyd Gaming Corporation, a NYSE publicly traded company. In addition, Ms. Spadafor is Managing Director at Cotala Holdings — an innovative private equity investment firm. She has a proven track record of significant business results in a broad spectrum of organizational settings: public, private, and nonprofit sectors — both domestic and international.~~

~~A graduate of Harvard Law School and the Harvard School of Public Health, she is a lecturer in the Visiting Executive Program at Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business. Christine Spadafor is the former CEO of [St. Jude's Ranch for Children](#) — a nationally recognized nonprofit that cares for homeless and abused children. She is a former partner at BCG (The Boston Consulting Group) and other leading management consulting firms.~~

~~Ms. Spadafor's core competencies and expertise include: optimizing organizational performance through leadership of enterprise-wide strategy development, design of operational improvements, implementation of corporate restructurings, integration planning for merger (both pre and post) implementations, and advising on complex~~

~~board governance matters.~~

~~Christine Spadafor has wide-ranging industry experience, including: healthcare, entertainment and media, insurance, telecommunications, energy, and equipment manufacturing and leasing.~~

Insights from this episode:

- Details on Christine's upbringing that had a solid base in feminism and hard work and lead to her expansive education and accomplishments.
- Reasons why Christine became a nurse but didn't pursue that career to a doctorate and the winding path that led her to graduate from Harvard Law School.
- Benefits of having a medical degree as a lawyer and how that influenced Christine's law career.
- How to recognize and develop your own opportunities and control your success.
- Difficulties women have and still face in attaining education and career goals and the need for mentors and sponsors to act as your champion.
- Details on Christine's struggle with a brain tumor to a successful end.

Quotes from the show:

- On her thoughts of life after high school: "It felt as though my head was filled with empty bookshelves and I needed to leave town to go and fill them up." — **Christine Spadafor**
- "I worked in the medical ICU (Intensive Care Unit), which is one of the most meaningful and greatest privileges I've had professionally." — **Christine Spadafor**
- "I was just really intellectually restless ... and I still feel it." — **Christine Spadafor**
- "Someone mentioned MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) to me in high school and I had no idea what it was and now here I am at MIT." — **Christine Spadafor**
- "While you learned the law in law school, it's different practicing law and really understanding how each of those [law] specialties work." — **Christine Spadafor**
- On how she became in-house counsel: "It's about creating your own opportunities, not just waiting for that job description to come through." — **Christine Spadafor**
- On being compensated for your work: "I think another way for 'payment' is to not only give you the big title but to give you the authority." — **Christine Spadafor**
- "It's a stereotype but backed by data, which is that women are not as aggressive a negotiator as a man, on average, in a corporate setting." — **Syd Finkelstein**

- “When thinking about a sponsor, think about those people who are influential and persuasive and who are well regarded.” — **Christine Spadafor**
- “Expecting something, then it doesn’t happen, that can take a psychological toll.” — **Syd Finkelstein**

Resources:

[*I Am Woman*](#) (2019 Film)

[*RBG*](#) (2018 Film)

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