



Authority Magazine

Female Disruptors: Nicole Marra of Fixer Advisory Group On The Three Things You Need To Shake Up Your Industry

An Interview with Candice Georgiadis

Nov 4, 2021



Don't undervalue your worth — show clients how and why you create transformative results. If the client doesn't understand that, it's ok — everyone isn't going to get it and it may not be the right time or relationship for you.

As a part of our series about “Why We Need More Women Founders”, I had the pleasure of interviewing Nicole Marra.

Nicole Marra is the CEO and Founder of Fixer Advisory Group, a full service consultancy that provides strategic partnership and tactical support to brands, including operations, legal services, communications and diversity, equity and inclusion, empowering them to thrive and achieve their full potential. Nicole is also the Co-Founder of Figure Eight, a sustainable luxury concept store in SoHo, New York.

Nicole Marra has earned a reputation as an exceptional strategic partner and a creative, collaborative problem solver. Nicole is an award winning entrepreneur, attorney, board member, and senior executive, and throughout her 20-year career has driven operations, protected assets, reduced liabilities, and supported retail business leaders to achieve exponential growth. For the last decade, Nicole led Gucci America's legal, real estate, compliance, security, and crisis management functions. During her tenure at Gucci, she also ran business and legal affairs for other Kering portfolio brands, including Alexander McQueen, Balenciaga, Bottega Veneta, Boucheron, Saint Laurent, Stella McCartney, and Sergio Rossi in North and South America. Nicole founded Fixer Advisory Group in January 2021.

Nicole is a graduate of New York University School of Law and Brandeis University. She resides in New York City with her husband and two children.



Thank you so much for doing this with us! Before we dig in, our readers would like to get to know you a bit more. Can you tell us a bit about your “backstory”? What led you to this particular career path?

From the outset of my career, I have always toggled back and forth between the corporate world and entrepreneurship. My early years as an entertainment lawyer in the 1990s led to me to film production and starting a business working with independent filmmakers. During my decade+ at Gucci as the General Counsel, I had the opportunity to work on some of the most interesting and high-profile projects in the world, and I continuously pushed for opportunities and responsibilities in business functions, like real estate compliance, security, and crisis management. That said, the culmination of my career to date has been the launch of Fixer Advisory Group, where I help business leaders dig deeper to bring bold, transformative initiatives into being. And even though running Fixer is an “every moment” endeavor for me, I continue to work with others to bring “side” projects to life, including co-founding Figure Eight, a sustainable luxury concept store in SoHo, New York, and working with my amazing colleagues in 4 Art Partners, an accelerator dedicated to empowering creative talent, including artists, designers, and emerging brands. I have always followed my instincts and pursued work and people that I think are special, and I have grown in my ability to lean into uncertainty and uncomfortable situations on my path to growth and self-awareness. I am a passionate and creative problem solver (i.e., “Fixer”) and find my creative outlets in analyzing difficult situations and supporting and advising business leaders.

Can you tell our readers what it is about the work you’re doing that’s disruptive?

I refuse to be put in a box as “just a lawyer” or “just a consultant.” I approach every project as a confidant, advisor and friend would, bringing my whole network to bear for all my clients. Because I deliver my expertise with passion, determination, and loyalty, I am all-in with my clients as I empower leaders to change and elevate their companies every day — I don’t hold back. I don’t bill hourly, because my offering is, essentially, full engagement through results, and I ask clients to make a minimum commitment for all projects because results take time. I only work with clients who “get it” and who I want to work with. I employ, source, and collaborate with experts of all kinds, all in service of the view that my clients are an extension of my business and vice versa. I have created a new way for companies to engage with experts so leaders can stay focused on their core business. Imagine if every CEO could have a strategic thought partner and confidant who could also deliver tactical results? That is what my team and I do — across many critical functions, from Legal, Human Resources, and ESG, to Communications, Real Estate and Operations. We meet companies where they are so that they can grow organically — whether by adding internal resources or not — without sacrificing quality and while improving strategic vision. By combining the technical skills and expertise typically found in traditional consulting and law firms with in-house business acumen, and a broad range of experts who are the best of the best at what they do, Fixer offers a one-stop strategic and tactical solution, tailored to fit each client’s needs.



Can you share a story about the funniest mistake you made when you were first starting? Can you tell us what lesson you learned from that?

Don't name your company after your imaginary friend from childhood. That should seem pretty obvious, but when I originally set up my company, I decided to do just that. Somehow it felt right (at the time), to bring an old friend along on this journey. In a moment of sheer excitement, I went online and formed an LLC called Jeffeny. While Jeffeny was a loyal friend to 3-year-old me, it is worth mentioning that Jeffeny had a habit of traveling to California and getting smashed...don't ask me why. After many years of therapy, I still haven't completely gotten to the root of it. Once I came to my senses and decided to name the company Fixer, the IRS and Covid had other plans for me. It took nearly 18 months trying to get the IRS to recognize a name change, and I am just now on the verge of officially retiring Jeffeny from her corporate adventure!

We all need a little help along the journey. Who have been some of your mentors? Can you share a story about how they made an impact?

I am so grateful for all of the help I have had along the way — especially during the past few years as I researched, contemplated, and mostly listened to some of the most kind, brilliant and passionate leaders, doers, and experts from all corners of my life. I continue to grow and nurture so many of these relationships from a wide range of industries and backgrounds and I often find that I get the opportunity to mentor my mentors right back! I have been supported in countless ways by my dear friend and colleague, Jodi Peikoff, a brilliant talent lawyer who has always followed her own, extraordinary path and has encouraged me to know and trust myself and my power. From connecting me with an incredible coach nearly 15 years ago to “incubating” me and my team with office space and teaching me how to make miso soup from scratch, I don't know if I would be where I am without her advice and support. I have also found incredible support from amazing retail expert and investor, Brigitte Kleine — her early feedback and subsequent introductions have been game-changing for me. Brigitte emphasized to me early on how CEOs have so little time and bandwidth — and that inspired me to coin the term “bandwidth” — referring to my mission of creating additional time, energy, and space for my clients to pursue their goals.

In today's parlance, being disruptive is usually a positive adjective. But is disrupting always good? When do we say the converse, that a system or structure has 'withstood the test of time'? Can you articulate to our readers when disrupting an industry is positive, and when disrupting an industry is 'not so positive'? Can you share some examples of what you mean?

Disruption is positive when it brings about change, innovation and growth that sets the stage for new systems that stand the test of time. Disruption for its own sake is just chaotic and unsettling, and businesses cannot flourish in chaos. When old systems aren't working, it is critical to find ways of reimagining them. For example, when Axiom Legal launched in the early 2000s and led the way for



companies to rethink how they engaged with lawyers and law firms, that was a huge game changer. It was smart, cost effective and solved the very real problem of big firm lawyers not being able to effectively meet corporate client needs as they fluctuated due to staffing issues, project and workflow needs, or other market changes. And for as long as that kind of engagement with legal solutions remains the most positive model, Axiom should continue to put its energies into creating that engagement. If, however, marketplace changes demand a pivot for some companies, firms or talent, disruption again becomes necessary — not to create chaos, but to open pathways to success.

Can you share 3 of the best words of advice you've gotten along your journey? Please give a story or example for each.

- Consider whether your choices will bring you joy and allow you to express your authentic self. I ask myself these questions before making any significant decision about next steps for my business and career.
- Be open to possibility and transform your worries into tools for advanced planning. For many years, I had this concept posted on a bulletin board above my desk and it was a constant touchpoint that helped me stay on course and manage my anxiety.
- Don't undervalue your worth — show clients how and why you create transformative results. If the client doesn't understand that, it's ok — everyone isn't going to get it and it may not be the right time or relationship for you.

We are sure you aren't done. How are you going to shake things up next?

First and foremost, I will continue to shake things up by growing Fixer's capacity and expanding our capabilities. Scaling Fixer's offering will create the kind of change I hope to see in the market. As for future projects, I am intrigued by the use of different forms of media to engage, educate, encourage and create community and opportunities for entrepreneurs, leaders and other disrupters. So whether that takes the form of writing, producing or broadcasting, content creation is definitely in the future for me and Fixer.

In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges faced by 'women disruptors' that aren't typically faced by their male counterparts?

Women often wait for permission to take risks or feel as if they must be total experts at something *before* trying out a new skill or venture. I think many women feel like they have to be perfect in order to be considered worthy or "good enough" to take a risk or seek change. Men often demonstrate a greater level of confidence than similarly expert women. The reasons behind that are



enough for a book or 3, or at least a great standup act! But in the end, men don't ask permission to be direct, assertive, or "big." I think a lot about how hard it is for women to be "big" in the world and be celebrated for that, as opposed to being harshly judged, vilified, or disliked. Even in this interview, some of your questions bring up this internal struggle for me, despite decades of experience and tremendous work to push through these issues. I have come to a place where I can acknowledge that struggle and move past it, but it did not come easily.

Do you have a book/podcast/talk that's had a deep impact on your thinking? Can you share a story with us?

Without a doubt it is Brene Brown and her work. *Daring Greatly* was a game changer for many, but before that, one of my mentors shared with me two of Brene's original TED talks on Shame and Vulnerability. I was incredibly inspired and started perceiving so many daily interactions and challenges through the perspective that Brene articulates so beautifully. Those talks fundamentally changed my approach to life and relationships of all kinds. I did not want to be sitting on the sidelines feeling afraid and criticizing others. I wanted to be in the ring — in the fight with the doers and changemakers.

You are a person of great influence. If you could inspire a movement that would bring the most amount of good to the most amount of people, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger. :-)

I would want to inspire a movement to help people feel safe and brave enough to approach life with an open heart as opposed to coming from a place of fear. When we are afraid, we cannot see the possibilities that are ahead of us and we are often defensive, shut down and rigid. When we approach people and situations from a place of peace, we can see the potential in ourselves and others, and bring about exponential change. When we are creative, flexible and courageous, we can do great things — together.

Can you please give us your favorite "Life Lesson Quote"? Can you share how that was relevant to you in your life?

You might be surprised that one of my favorite life lesson quotes is over 100 years old and comes from a blue-blooded New York man. Theodore Roosevelt nailed it for me in his 1910 "Man in the Arena" speech: "It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly;...who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly." Teddy had the insight to recognize that there is no honor



in being a hater. Failing and moving forward, that belongs to the courageous, not the fearful. Rejecting the unearned rights of others to knock down those who try and do, has opened a world of possibilities for me — to fail, succeed, connect, grow and inspire.

How can our readers follow you online?

They can visit the Fixer website at Fixeradvisory.com

Thank you for these fantastic insights. We greatly appreciate the time you spent on this.