



LEADERS IN FOCUS

WITH ALEXANDRA ÅQUIST

Country Manager, Aranzadi LA LEY – Spain /
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Karnov Group, a Swedish provider of legal information and digital solutions, strengthened its presence in Southern Europe through the acquisition of Aranzadi and LA LEY, the two Spain's leading legal information companies that merged into Aranzadi LA LEY afterwards. Today, the business serves legal professionals across Spain and is helping drive the digital transformation of the legal sector.

At the forefront of this journey is Swedish born Alexandra Åquist, Chief Revenue Officer of Karnov Group and Country Manager for Spain at Aranzadi LA LEY. With more than two decades of leadership experience, she plays a key role in driving growth and innovation across the region. In this interview with the Spanish-Swedish Chamber of Commerce, she shares her perspectives on leadership, transformation, AI and leading teams across different markets.

Swedish fika or Spanish picoteo?

If I have to choose between Swedish fika and Spanish picoteo, I have to say Swedish fika – precisely because I live in Spain. You miss what you can't have every day. The day I move back to Sweden, I suspect my answer will be picoteo instead.



In three words, how would you describe your leadership style?

Result-driven, customer centric and trust in my colleagues.

How do you protect your energy and focus as a leader?

When it comes to protecting my energy and focus as a leader, I actually get a lot of both from my colleagues. I am incredibly fortunate to be surrounded by wonderful and highly competent people. That makes a huge difference. Another important source of energy is believing in what we do – having a higher purpose. For me, Aranzadi LA LEY is part of the rule of law in Spain. Knowing that our work contributes to legal certainty gives me energy every single day.

What advice would you give to someone leading across cultures for the first time?

Listen, and genuinely try to understand before you act. Question your own ingrained ideas about what “good leadership” looks like.

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What worked in one culture may not work in another. Leading across cultures is a gift, because it forces you to see your leadership from new perspectives and to grow. Be curious, ask questions, and be open to adapting to your approach.

Choose a fictional character or historical figure you admire as a leader, and explain why.

I would choose Malala Yousafzai as a leader I admire. Her courage and clear sense of purpose are incredibly inspiring to me. Despite facing extreme violence and resistance, she never gave up on her conviction that every girl has the right to education. She combines moral clarity with humility and an ability to communicate across cultures and generations. Malala shows that real leadership is not about position or title, but about standing up for others, even when it is difficult or dangerous. Her belief in non-violence, and the way she uses her voice to create change make her a role model for my own leadership.

Being a leader in Scandinavia compared to your leader role here in Spain, is there anything that surprised you?

Being a leader in Scandinavia compared to being a leader in Spain has also taught me a lot. The difference is quite big. A Spanish leader is generally expected to be more authoritarian and to take clearer, more top-down decisions. At the same time, it is essential to build trust and maintain a very direct dialogue with people; otherwise, you risk missing important perspectives and skills in the organization. Balancing cultural expectations with my own leadership values has been both challenging and very rewarding.

You have worked in several different roles within Karnov Group, what have you learned about leading through change?

Within Karnov Group I have worked in several different roles, and that has shaped how I lead through change.



I've learned that you must respect the emotions that change creates. People react differently, and those reactions are valid. At the same time, you have to be very clear about where you are heading – this is not the moment to become soft or vague. Clarity and honesty are essential. It is also important to create energy around change. Change can and should be exciting; it is both fun and necessary.

After a career spanning different industries, countries and leadership roles, what continues to motivate and inspire you today?

After a career spanning different industries, countries and leadership roles, what continues to motivate and inspire me today are people and results – in that order. It's the people who truly motivate me. I love seeing talent and having the opportunity to help develop it. Watching someone grow into their potential and succeed is one of the most rewarding parts of leadership.

Looking back, what advice would you give your younger self?

Looking back, the advice I would give my younger self is: be yourself and follow your heart. Don't let other people's expectations define your choices. You got this!

Looking ahead, what is next for you personally, professionally, or for the sector you represent?

Looking ahead, the next step for me – and for the sector I represent – is to keep building real value for our customers in an industry that is undergoing major change. That means talking to our customers, understanding their reality, and continuously developing our offering to make their everyday work easier. It's a big task, but also a very energizing one.