

## Artist First

An Interview with Julie Swidler, Executive Vice President, Business Affairs and General Counsel, Sony Music Entertainment

**EDITORS' NOTE** Julie Swidler is Executive Vice President, Business Affairs and General Counsel for Sony Music Entertainment, where she oversees business, legal, and governmental affairs for the company globally. As one of the most powerful dealmakers in the music industry, Swidler brings a rare depth of insight and acumen to her role. She has advised the company's labels and operating units on everything from strategic negotiations and artist contracts



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to litigation and joint venture operations. Repeatedly featured on Billboard's Women in Music and Power 100 lists, Swidler was the first Label Executive (and first woman) to receive the 2016 Grammy Foundation's ELI Service Award given to music attorneys for advancing and supporting the music community through service. That same year, Swidler was honored by Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts with its Champion of the Arts award. In 2018, when the Recording Academy wanted to put together a small task force to examine diversity and inclusion issues in both the recording academy and the recorded music industry at large, Swidler was tapped to serve on this task force. Swidler started her career in the music business in 1988 at PolyGram Records as Senior Attorney, rising to Assistant General Counsel and Vice President-Assistant General Counsel, North America, and Head of Business

Affairs for Mercury Records before leaving to join Clive Davis at Arista and later J Records. Swidler holds a BA degree in political science from Union College and a JD from Cardozo Law School, where she was a member of the Cardozo Law Review.

**COMPANY BRIEF** Sony Music Entertainment ([sonymusic.com](http://sonymusic.com)) honors the creative journey. The company's creators shape movements, culture, communities, and history. It has played a pioneering role in music

history, from establishing the first-ever music label to inventing the flat disc record. Sony Music Entertainment has nurtured some of music's most iconic artists and produced some of the most influential recordings of all time. Today, the company works in more than 100 countries, supporting a diverse and distinctive roster of talented creators at every level and on every stage. Situated at the intersection of music, entertainment, and technology, Sony Music Entertainment brings imagination and expertise to emerging products and platforms, embraces new business models, and employs breakthrough tools – all to support the creative community's experimentation, risk-taking, and growth. The company forms deep, trusted, cause-based partnerships to uplift and empower communities around the world. Sony Music Entertainment is part of the global Sony family.

**How do you define Sony Music Entertainment's culture and values?**

The way that I would describe Sony Music Entertainment's culture is artist first. Everything we do, we try to think about what is best for our artists and somehow that becomes best for us as well.

**What have been the keys to Sony Music Entertainment's industry leadership?**

I think it all leads back to the above artist-first approach.

**Will you provide an overview of your role and areas of focus?**

My areas of focus are the legal, business affairs, and public policy strategies of the company. What that means is that there is very little that the company does that my team is not across. I have had to make sure that as a result, I am totally focused on learning every aspect of our business issues in the present and for the future, including new technologies.

**What are your views on the state of the music industry?**

For the moment, the music industry is doing better than it has in decades. That being said, we need to stay vigilant because as technology changes, our business with morph with it.

**What attracted you to the music business and what has made the industry so special for you?**

I have always loved music from a very young age. I was a DJ in college, I played three instruments and was part of a performing duo in college. Being able to be a lawyer in the music business has been a dream come true. ●

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