

Influential Women Profiles: Ilona Barskaya, Managing Partner of Votum Consulting LLC

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Regulatory Operations Expert and Biotech Advisor Drives Innovation, Operational Excellence, and Industry Advancement Across Pharma and Biotechnology

Burlingame, California — Ilona Barskaya is the Managing Partner of Votum Consulting LLC, a regulatory operations consulting firm dedicated to helping pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies achieve operational excellence. With nearly two decades of experience in the life sciences industry, she has established herself as a strategic leader, trusted advisor, and subject matter expert in regulatory operations, systems, and submissions. Her work



focuses on helping organizations design scalable regulatory infrastructures, improve efficiency, and maintain compliance in an increasingly complex global environment.

Throughout her career, Ilona has built a reputation for transforming regulatory operations functions within both large global organizations and emerging biotech companies. She partners with clients to optimize submission processes, implement enterprise regulatory systems, and design operational frameworks that support long-term growth. Her expertise spans regulatory strategy, system implementation, submission execution, and end-to-end process transformation.

Ilona began her career at Genentech/Roche, where she entered the industry in an entry-level role with limited prior exposure to the pharmaceutical sector. Through curiosity, persistence, and continuous learning, she advanced steadily through the organization into senior leadership roles. Over more than a decade, she led global regulatory operations teams, managed complex

submission portfolios, and contributed to strategic initiatives including workforce planning, outsourcing models, and large-scale operational improvements that enhanced global regulatory efficiency.

Her early experience at Genentech/Roche shaped the foundation of her leadership philosophy. By immersing herself in the work, seeking out knowledge, and engaging with cross-functional teams, she developed a deep understanding of regulatory systems and the importance of collaboration in achieving organizational success. These formative years also reinforced her belief in the value of mentorship, professional development, and building strong, trust-based relationships.

Ilona later joined MyoKardia, a rapidly growing biotechnology company, where she was brought in to establish and lead the Regulatory Operations function from the ground up. In this role, she defined the strategic vision for regulatory infrastructure, implemented enterprise systems such as Veeva RIM, and guided the organization through critical regulatory milestones, including NDA preparation and post-acquisition integration following MyoKardia's acquisition by Bristol Myers Squibb. Her leadership ensured continuity, compliance, and operational stability during a period of significant organizational change.

Building on her extensive industry experience and strong professional network, Ilona founded Votum Consulting LLC. Through her consulting practice, she now partners with small to mid-sized pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies to design, build, and optimize regulatory operations functions. Her work enables organizations to scale effectively while maintaining high standards of quality, compliance, and regulatory readiness. She is widely recognized for her ability to translate complex operational challenges into practical, scalable solutions that deliver measurable impact.

Known for her collaborative leadership style, Ilona is also deeply committed to mentoring professionals in the regulatory operations field. She actively contributes to the broader life sciences community by sharing knowledge, supporting emerging leaders, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Her career reflects a consistent trajectory of growth, innovation, and impact across every stage of the regulatory lifecycle.

Ilona attributes her success to a combination of curiosity, continuous learning, and a willingness to step outside her comfort zone. When she began her career at Genentech, she entered the industry with little prior experience, prompting her to adopt a proactive approach to learning. She sought out knowledge, asked questions, joined professional groups, and actively participated in industry associations to deepen her understanding and accelerate her development.

Throughout her career, Ilona has benefited from strong mentorship and leadership guidance. She credits mentors and colleagues who challenged her thinking, supported her growth, and encouraged her to take on opportunities beyond her perceived capabilities. These relationships

played a critical role in shaping her confidence, leadership approach, and long-term career trajectory.

A key part of her development also came from pushing beyond her comfort zone. As someone naturally introverted, Ilona worked deliberately to build confidence in areas such as public speaking, leadership visibility, and cross-functional communication. She learned that confidence is developed through preparation, action, and repeated exposure to new challenges, even when readiness feels uncertain.

She also emphasizes the importance of trust, collaboration, and professional reputation. By consistently delivering high-quality work and building strong relationships, she established a foundation that opened doors to leadership opportunities, including the chance to build regulatory functions from the ground up and eventually launch her own consulting firm. At the core of her journey is a mindset defined by growth, resilience, and adaptability.

The best career advice Ilona has received comes from a combination of mentors and professional experiences throughout her career. A consistent theme has been the importance of curiosity—never assuming you have all the answers and always seeking to understand the “why” behind processes rather than simply executing tasks. This mindset has enabled her to navigate complex regulatory challenges and evolve alongside a rapidly changing industry.

She was also encouraged to take initiative in creating opportunities rather than waiting for them. Whether volunteering for new projects, stepping into unfamiliar roles, or building cross-functional relationships, this approach helped accelerate her career development and expand her leadership capabilities.

Another defining principle she learned is the importance of investing in relationships and reputation. Trust and credibility, built over time, became foundational to her success and ultimately supported her transition into consulting and entrepreneurship. These lessons continue to guide her leadership philosophy today, rooted in curiosity, initiative, and collaboration.

Ilona also encourages young women entering the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry to embrace curiosity, seek learning opportunities, and remain open to growth. When she entered the field at Genentech, she was new to the industry, but she immersed herself fully by participating in professional organizations, joining industry groups, and accepting opportunities even when she did not feel fully prepared.

She emphasizes the importance of stepping outside of comfort zones, noting that some of the most meaningful professional growth occurs in challenging and unfamiliar situations. Experiences such as public speaking, leadership roles, and high-visibility projects often become pivotal moments in career development.

Ilona also addresses the common experience of self-doubt, particularly among women in technical and leadership roles. She encourages individuals to recognize that such feelings are normal and not reflective of their capabilities. Confidence, she notes, is built over time through consistent action, self-trust, and persistence.

Above all, she encourages proactive career development—actively shaping one's path, taking risks, and believing in personal potential. She believes the pharmaceutical and biotech industry offers vast opportunities for those willing to engage fully and continuously evolve.

One of the most significant challenges facing the industry today is the rapid pace of technological and regulatory change, particularly the emergence of artificial intelligence. While AI presents transformative potential, many organizations are still determining how to responsibly integrate these tools into regulatory operations while maintaining compliance and quality standards.

The industry is also experiencing increased pressure from accelerated drug development timelines and a growing pipeline of innovative therapies. This creates heightened demand for efficiency, precision, and strategic execution within regulatory functions.

Despite these challenges, Ilona views the current landscape as an era of extraordinary opportunity. AI and digital transformation have the potential to significantly improve regulatory processes, streamline submissions, enhance data management, and accelerate decision-making. Organizations that adopt these innovations thoughtfully are well-positioned to reduce timelines and improve patient access to life-changing therapies.

In her view, the future of regulatory operations will be defined by the ability to balance innovation with compliance while reimagining traditional processes to improve efficiency and impact.

Ilona's professional and personal values center on impact, continuous learning, and meaningful connection. She is driven by a commitment to helping clients succeed and views her consulting work as a partnership rooted in trust, quality, and shared purpose. Alongside her business partner, she strives to address gaps in industry support by delivering high-value, collaborative solutions that strengthen organizational performance and accelerate therapeutic development.

She also maintains a strong commitment to lifelong learning, continuously seeking new knowledge through reading, professional engagement, and industry insights. This curiosity has remained a constant throughout her career and continues to shape her evolution as a leader and consultant.

Equally important is her dedication to family and personal balance. As a mother of a college student and a teenager, she prioritizes meaningful time with her family while maintaining space for rest, connection, and personal fulfillment.

Ultimately, Ilona believes that purpose, growth, and relationships are the foundation of both professional success and personal fulfillment. By integrating these values into her work and life, she continues to lead with intention, impact, and authenticity.

Through Votum Consulting LLC and her ongoing contributions to the life sciences industry, Ilona Barskaya remains a driving force in advancing regulatory operations excellence, supporting innovation, and helping organizations bring life-changing therapies to patients more efficiently.

Learn More about Ilona Barskaya:

Through her Influential Women profile, <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/Ilona-Barskaya> or through her website, <https://www.votumco.com/>

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