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AttackIQ's Danielle Murcay on guiding a tech startup through a pandemic

BY [REY MASHAYEKHI](#)

July 19, 2021 4:00 AM CDT

Good morning. This is *Fortune's* Rey Mashayekhi, filling in again for Sheryl today.

As CFO of a fast-growing cybersecurity startup, Danielle Murcay finds herself wearing a lot of different hats—not that she's complaining.

"I think a lot of times, CFOs are seen as being behind the scenes, and that's never really been me or my personality," Murcay tells *Fortune*. In addition to running financial and accounting operations for Silicon Valley cybersecurity firm AttackIQ, Murcay has a broad purview that involves helping human resources, talent acquisition, and field operations, among other tasks. "It's actually one of my favorite things about my job—to get out of the mundane accounting and finance side of things and actually work with people. I personally love it."

While she notes that such a varied role isn't all that atypical for a C-suite executive at an eight-year-old, 115-person startup like AttackIQ, it's been a whole different kind of challenge amid an unprecedented pandemic—one that broke out and wreaked havoc upon the global economy only five months after she joined the company in October 2019.

But Murcay has looked to rise to the challenge, leading outreach efforts to the firm's global workforce (AttackIQ has teams of engineers in Spain and Argentina) and making sure the company would be prepared for a whole

multitude of scenarios. “In the past, I would always run three business models: worst case, most likely case, and best case,” she says. “And I probably ran about 30 different scenario planning models in the first four-to-five months of [the pandemic]. It was unprecedented, and something that I had never done before.”

No longer could the firm run a routine budgeting process that could be rolled forward, quarter-by-quarter, on a relatively consistent basis. “There was just so much going on, and we didn’t know what our customers were going to buy,” she notes. “The team has budgeted an entire budget cycle almost every single quarter. It’s just crazy, and something you’ve never seen before as a CFO.”

Yet working alongside CEO Brett Galloway and the rest of AttackIQ’s executive team, Murcay has helped shepherd the startup through the pandemic and seen it emerge in an even stronger position. Just last week, the company announced a [\\$44 million in a Series C funding round](#) led by investors including Atlantic Bridge and [Saudi Aramco](#) Energy Ventures, and it plans to deploy that capital to continue its growth in a [red-hot cybersecurity market](#).

“This is really a great space to be in right now,” Murcay says. “It’s really just a matter of continuing to grow and continuing to get our name out there,” with AttackIQ especially eyeing a “huge growth opportunity” via international expansion in the coming years.

In the meantime, she’s embracing her role as the company’s de facto chief people officer, in which she’s guided AttackIQ’s transition into a fully remote enterprise in the U.S. during the pandemic. The native Californian now works out of her home in Montana, where she recently bought a property, and Murcay believes that providing today’s in-demand tech talent with a flexible, employee-focused workplace culture is crucial to attracting and retaining their services. She says that in the last month or so alone, she’s seen “probably four or five changes of state come across” her desk from employees moving from one part of the country to another.

“I think for all startups, culture is something that really needs to be focused on, because you’re competing for talent with very large corporations,” she says. “You have to be able to set yourself apart; you can’t always give them more money, because [Google](#) is going to outshine you every single time from a money perspective, so you have to offer them something else... So people are taking advantage of the fact that we’ve gone remote and that they can work anywhere.”

That’s all from me; Sheryl will be back with you tomorrow. Until next time, have a wonderful day.

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