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Newsletter

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FROM THE NATIONAL BOARD CO-CHAIRS



Marcia Owens
*Partner in Real Estate,
Hamilton Thies & Lorch LLP*



Margo Wolf O'Donnell
*Partner and Co-Chair,
Labor & Employment, Benesch*

As the Coalition of Women's Initiatives in Law enters its second decade, we are thrilled to serve as Co-Chairs of the National Board. The energy the Coalition brings to the cities it serves was on full display at the Coalition's recent ten-year anniversary celebration and the first Coalition National Board event. All nine of the Chicago Coalition's past presidents, including the two of us, sat on a panel at the event, discussing how the Coalition supported and enhanced our careers. What was so moving about the panel was that despite the different paths we had taken in the law, some at large

firms and others at small firms or in-house, we all had kept the Coalition's mission a priority. The fact that nine busy women and former Coalition presidents took the time to tell their stories and provide advice to other women lawyers demonstrates how well we had all learned that supporting other women in the law should remain at the forefront. The recognized importance of the work that the Coalition does to enable women to rise in legal profession has resulted in the Coalition's expansion from Chicago to New York and now Washington, DC, our newest chapter. Washington,

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D.C. launched earlier this year with several new member firms and companies and has already had several well-attended events. The Coalition's National Board oversees the Coalition's three chapters in Chicago, New York and Washington, DC. Pursuant to its bylaws, the Coalition National Board is comprised of members from all three of its chapters. In addition to our service as co-chairs, other Coalition national board members are: Marjorie Just (Washington, DC); Nicole Auerbach (Chicago); Julianne Hartzell (Chicago); Carolyn Blessing (Chicago), Kim Metrick (Chicago); Christina Bost Seaton (New York); Mehtap Cehver Conti (New York); Jean Cooper Rose (New York); and Nneoma Maduiké (New York). There are still open spots on the national board -- please let us know if you are interested. Our webinar capability now allows us to broadcast programs throughout our Chapters. We hope to leverage this technology to see more programs hosted in this manner, so we can continue to introduce our members to high level topics and speakers while sharing the heavy lifting of producing quality programming. If you have suggestions for a webinar topic or speaker, please reach out to us. We would love to hear your ideas.

As we move into summer, we encourage you to take a moment to reflect on your goals and plans for the year, whether they are personal or professional, and develop a path to reach

them by year end. We also ask that you consider bringing a summer associate or intern to a Coalition event. This will ensure that our membership continues to grow at all levels and will continue our mission for the next generation.

Our leadership experiences with the Coalition have shown us the impact we can have on our careers and on those of other women if we support one other in our endeavors. We have learned to take on challenges with leadership roles in our firms, which equip us to build better and more efficient teams for our clients. We have had the chance to test what does and does not work in terms of motivating others, and these lessons have resonated through our careers.

It is an honor for us to see the growth of the Coalition and see directly how our leadership can encourage other women not to be afraid to take on roles that might be outside of their comfort zone, thereby enhancing their careers. As Katie Rak, one of our past presidents said, "You have to get comfortable being uncomfortable." Our clients know that as leaders of the Coalition we understand that supporting others in the profession is of utmost importance. We are so glad that the Coalition has grown and touched thousands of women lawyers in three cities with its programs, and we look forward to seeing what we can all do together in this second decade.

Incivility at Work: How to Stay Engaged When You Work with a Jerk

By: Paula Davis-Laack, JD, MAPP



One of my first experiences with workplace incivility happened when I was a paralegal before going to law school. The partner I worked for got upset

when I switched the order of two documents in a binder. I can still vividly remember both the spittle and the expletives tumbling out of his red-with-

anger face. After law school, I interviewed with the vice-president of a large organization, and he spent the entire interview checking his email. Each is

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an example of workplace incivility, though on very different ends of the spectrum.

Think of the last time you encountered a jerk at work. How did you handle the situation? Two popular approaches – avoiding the person or confronting the jerk directly – are often unsuccessful according to surveys by workplace incivility expert, Dr. Christine Porath¹. She found that more than 85% of people who chose to either avoid or confront a jerk were disappointed with how the situation ended.

According to Porath and her colleagues, there are specific ways individuals and organizations can curtail incivility²:

Set zero-tolerance expectations. These expectations need to be initiated at the top of an organization and repeated regularly. And, the policy needs to be enforced. What would your response be if a member of your organization acted in such a way toward a client? You should expect the same level of discourse employee to employee.

Focus on your own growth. One of the most effective ways to continue to thrive in the situation is by focusing on your own growth and progress by tracking small wins. Small wins act like tiny psychological

booster shots and are extremely motivational (even more so than recognition or pay).³ Interestingly, you can see a mental toughness payoff at work by focusing your development efforts outside of work too – like taking on a challenging new skill or hobby.

Work with a mentor. Later on in my law career, my mentor became an invaluable resource to help me manage certain toxic personalities at my law firm. Mentors can help you navigate the political landmines that may exist, particularly if the jerk is your boss or another prominent member of the organization.

Solicit bottom-up input & stop making excuses. By allowing staff to review lawyers and associates to review partners, organizations can develop candid perspectives about instigators and patterns that may have developed. I once overheard a partner call his assistant fat, and while it was awful for me to hear, I'm sure it completely deflated her. This was not the first time this guy had been so rude, and firms have to stop making excuses for powerful instigators. "That's just how he is" or "She's a top rainmaker, so we just look the other way" are common excuses, but what is the opportunity cost of keeping jerks? This behavior tanks morale, productivity, engagement, and

creates turnover all of which impacts your bottom line.

Look for opportunities to innovate. Innovation is a hot topic in the legal profession now, and you can use this opportunity to contribute to projects that may not be part of your daily routine. Maybe you have some ideas about how to reinvent your associate onboarding program? Does a client of yours have an important initiative you can join or contribute to? A new project might also be a way to bring more meaning into your work or life.

Spend time cultivating positive networks. According to Porath, negative relationships have a four to seven times as much impact on an employee's sense of thriving as compared to high-quality, positive relationships. Positive relationships are built on a foundation of trust, empowerment, engagement, and fun or play.

Nearly 98% of workers have experienced uncivil behavior and 99% have witnessed it.⁴ Simply put, if you work, this is an issue you will encounter. Organizations and individuals can do a lot to help mitigate the workplace ramifications of incivility and boost their own engagement in the process. How do you handle incivility at work?

¹Christine Porath. An Antidote to Incivility. Harvard Business Review (April 2016). Retrieved online at <https://hbr.org/2016/04/an-antidote-to-incivility>.

²Christine M. Pearson & Christine L. Porath. On the Nature, Consequences and Remedies of Workplace Incivility: No Time for "Nice?" Think Again. 19(1) Acad. of Mgmt. Executive 7-18 (2005). See also Christine Porath. Mastering Civility: A Manifesto for the Workplace. (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing 2016).

³Teresa M. Amabile & Steven J. Kramer. The Progress Principle: Using Small Wins to Ignite Joy, Engagement, and Creativity at Work. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing 2011).

⁴Supra note 1.

Chicago Chapter

CHICAGO MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Anne Larson

Equity shareholder at Ogletree Deakins



Describe what you do.

I am an employment litigator. My practice has evolved into defending class or collective actions such as claims under the Biometric Information Privacy Act (BIPA), the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), Section 1981 of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 (Section 1981) and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII). The latter tend to be disparate impact claims involving alleged discrimination in hiring (i.e., hiring shortfalls based on race or other protected characteristics).

When did you first join the Coalition?

In 2014. Former Coalition President Margo Wolf O'Donnell told me about the Coalition and asked me to join. Margo and I worked together as "Young Leaders" for the Chicago Community Trust's Young Leaders' Fund (YLF). In different years, we ran YLF as that year's Co-Chair.

What positions have you held in the Coalition?

Since 2014, I have been Co-Chair of Programming. I am also an executive board officer and have held the "officer at large" position since 2017.

What was your first job?

My first job was as a waitress, which forced me to go up to tables and engage customers in conversation. It caused me to overcome my shyness. As a young lawyer, I was a law clerk to U.S. District Judge George Lindberg, who was a huge advocate for women and a gracious man, who loved life and people. He gave me the opportunity to write opinions on motions to dismiss, motions in limine and motions for summary judgment. He also had me run jury instruction and settlement conferences and help with evidentiary rulings at trial. It was the most fun I've ever had as a lawyer.

What is your fondest career memory or highlight?

I tried my first jury trial alone in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York before Judge Spatt. He was known as a "trial dog" who ignored all motions for summary judgment and refused to set trial dates. He would call the parties on a Friday and tell you to be in New York to start trial Monday morning. The plaintiff in my case had multiple sclerosis and his son was autistic. His complaint alleged ADA and FMLA discrimination and retaliation

claims. Judge Spatt told my client to settle the case and that we would never win. He recommended an amount, but plaintiff rejected it.

Plaintiff's counsel failed to timely disclose an expert but filed a motion on the trial's first day to belatedly disclose one. Judge Spatt was seriously considering it and offered me the opportunity to depose the expert late at night. I began to feel "hometowned" and asked leave to file a motion to quash. The next day, while the attorneys were in the judge's chambers, I saw a picture of Judge Spatt with Judge Lindberg at "new judge's training school." I pointed out the picture and my judge. Judge Spatt said with gusto: "George Lindberg is my friend." Later that week, my motion to quash was granted and I no longer felt hometowned. When the trial ended two weeks later, the jury returned an "NG" or not guilty for my client.

What is the best advice you ever received?

To answer the phone when clients call, so clients view you as someone they can readily contact. If you cannot have a substantive discussion then, take

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the call anyway but schedule a mutually convenient time to talk. Same for emails. In-house counsel for a Fortune 500 company once told me that it surprises her how many outside counsel forget to ask her how she wants them to communicate with her – e.g., via email, voice mail, phone call followed by a short email, etc. Since then, I make sure to ask such questions.

What advice you would give to a woman lawyer just starting out?

Keep your eyes open, see what areas of law (or types of cases) interest you and go do it. Make it happen. Be self-aware about your strengths and weaknesses. Realize that sometimes the same attribute can be a strength and a liability, depending on the situation. Surround yourself with excellent talent and those who shore up any weaknesses.

Tell others what you want to do and ask questions. Figure out who are the best attorneys in areas that interest you and learn from them. If your firm has a Knowledge Management database, use it to the hilt.

Do not worry about things you cannot control. Average 7 hours of sleep per night. If you cannot do that, find ways to get help at home or at work. Take advantage of any “breaks in the action” and fully enjoy your time off. Thank people for their time and generosity and pay it forward. If someone in another Ogletree office has helped me in a pinch, I send them Lou Malnati’s pizzas as a thank you.

To what do you attribute your success?

My parents (Dick and Irma), my brother (Mark), my maternal grandmother (Lydia), my husband (Josh) and my assistant (Jodi). Also, an absolute love of reading and learning. Utter tenacity in approaching and solving problems – realizing that getting things accomplished and winning is fun! If a situation is out of my control, I seek advice and help. Can you please help? What would you do? What can we do to get this done or to fix this? In general, I am one to ask questions and always have - since I was a kid. Things frustrate me daily but gratitude and happiness balance it out.

What’s your favorite Coalition program you’ve attended?

There are so many. I loved February’s “Fireside Chat with Elizabeth Alexander.” Elizabeth went to law school at Georgetown while serving as press secretary for former Vice President Joe Biden. She is now a crisis management and strategic communications consultant for FTI Consulting. Elizabeth talked about how the #MeToo movement has impacted clients and her work. She also answered questions about the crisis then enveloping the Virginia governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general regarding old photographs in blackface and sexual assault allegations.

Where do you hope to be in 5 years?

Traveling the world, reading, exercising daily, and writing a screenplay with my husband Josh Vincent on some of the wackiest experiences we’ve had in life and in law.

Coffee or tea?

Green tea. Also, daily wheat grass juice.»

CHICAGO UPCOMING EVENTS

Seventh Annual Judges Panel

July 11, 2019

Hosted by Jones Day

Generational Differences

July 23, 2019

Hosted by Latham & Watkins

Financial Freedom for Women

September Date and Location TBA

Peter Bensinger Program, Questioning Leadership

September 24, 2019

Hosted by Bartlit Beck

10th Annual Leadership Forum

Fall 2019

Hosted by Kirkland & Ellis

Kendra Scott Jewelry Event

November 6, 2019

New York Chapter

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Elizabeth Schrero

Partner, Seyfarth Shaw LLP



Describe what you do.

Real Estate litigation; Business Disputes; and General Cooperative, Condominium, Property Owner and Commercial Tenant representation.

When did you first join the Coalition?

January-February 2016.

What positions have you held in the Coalition?

Co-Chair of Programming; Chair of Programming; Secretary; and Treasurer.

What was your first job?

Medical Malpractice and products liability litigation (plaintiff side).

What is your fondest career memory or highlight?

Following a finding of liability against my condominium board client, obtaining an award entirely defeating a commercial unit owner's claim for \$32 Million in damages, at the conclusion of a 9-day damages hearing and more than 8 years of contentious litigation in a complex arbitration including issues of condominium governance, fiduciary duty, contracts, development rights, construction, insurance and other issues.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Develop your practice!

What advice you would give to a woman lawyer just starting out?

Build a network externally and within your organization.

To what do you attribute your success?

Excellent service, diligence, tenacity, and strong personal relationships.

What's your favorite Coalition program you've attended?

NOW Event.

Where do you hope to be in 5 years?

Doing what I am doing now, with a broader and larger network and client base.

Coffee or tea?

Coffee! »

NEW YORK UPCOMING EVENTS

Bottomless Closet Clothing Drive

June – July 2019

Rooftop Networking Cocktail Reception

July 10, 2019

Hosted by Virginia & Ambinder LLP

Presentation: Courtroom Confidence: How to Display Confidence and Maintain Command of your Case When an Expert in on Your Turf

September 2019

Breast Cancer Awareness Walk

October 20, 2019

2nd Annual Leadership Forum

November 2019

Hosted by Arnold & Porter

Yearend Meeting and Holiday Celebration

December 2019

Washington, D.C. Chapter

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Marjorie Just

Principal Attorney, Offit Kurman



Describe what you do.

I practice family law in DC and Maryland, which means I represent people with divorce-related issues, whether division of property, custody or support issues. My specialty is complex family law litigation, meaning high-conflict custody cases, or complex assets; I'm also a mediator, and I prepare premarital agreements, and assisted reproductive technology agreements.

When did you first join the Coalition?

I first learned about the Coalition at a reception in the Fall of 2018 at which leaders of the Chicago and New York chapters spoke. I met some inspiring and dynamic women and wanted to be a part of what they were doing to advance the careers of women lawyers in this area.

What positions have you held in the Coalition?

I am the DC Chapter's current President. I also serve on the Board of the DC Chapter, and on the National Board.

What was your first job?

I clerked at a small Family Law firm that specialized in complex

Family Law litigation, called Witt & Nolan. There were two partners and me. It was a trial by fire. The first few years were tough but I learned a tremendous amount, and was given a lot of responsibility and litigation experience quickly.

What is your fondest career memory or highlight?

It is hard to pick one memory. Wins in court are a terrific feeling. But I would say my fondest memories have been those moments with clients when I have helped them over the finish line of a tough road, whether by litigation or reaching a settlement. It's incredibly rewarding to help someone obtain or maintain custody of their children. Or to help someone conclude a difficult divorce, where they can now start a new chapter of their life. There have been a lot of tears and hugs.

Becoming President of the DC Chapter of the Women's Coalition has definitely been a career highlight. The camaraderie with such accomplished women across the city has been incredibly exciting.

What is the best advice you ever received?

My parents led by example. My father is a retired surgeon, and my mother is a retired political science professor. Without any lecturing, they taught me the importance of working hard, following through on promises, and the reward of choosing a career in which you help others.

In terms of specific advice, when I was a teenager, my father told me that when choosing a career, I should make sure I enjoy the tedious, daily tasks of the job, because I will be doing them for a very long time. That advice stuck with me as I tried to decide on a career path, and particularly on an area of specialization.

What advice you would give to a woman lawyer just starting out?

Learning what you don't want is as important as learning what you do want. Trial and error, making mistakes, they are uncomfortable experiences but ones we learn so much from. That applies to relationships as well as career choices!

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To what do you attribute your success?

A continuing fascination with what makes family relationships work or not work. As well as persistence and attention to detail.

What's your favorite Coalition program you've attended?

Our chapter has just started, so we have had only one program so far, which was amazing! Debbie Epstein Henry spoke to us about "Networking: Beyond the Basics." She was inspiring and I met many terrific colleagues that evening!

Where do you hope to be in 5 years?

Continuing my family law practice, while the mother of a 14-year-old.

Coffee or tea?

Green tea in the morning, coffee in the afternoon. »

D.C. UPCOMING EVENTS

Work-Life Balance & Stress Management for Attorneys

Tuesday, July 23, 2019

Steptoe & Johnson

Women in Law Firm Leadership

September 2019

Location TBA

Questions or Comments?
info@thewomenscoalition.com

Website
TheWomensCoalition.com

