

BAKER DONELSON

WOMEN'S INITIATIVE

STRIVE



Issue 2, 2018

This is an advertisement.

I blinked, and here we are, on the cusp of a new season and the end of long summer days filled with swimming pools, popsicles, and fireflies. This issue of *Strive* focuses on mentoring – something we all benefit from no matter our season of life. Sarah Powell shares her career “dos and don’ts” with us, while [Kristine Roberts](#) and [Tiye Foley](#) offer insight into the Baker Donelson Women’s Initiative’s mentoring program. Don’t miss Anna Hartog’s thoughts on forming mentoring relationships when you are in-house, or [Tim Lupinacci’s](#) call to action regarding sponsoring women. We hope this newsletter will inspire you to expand your existing mentoring relationships, whether you are a mentor or a mentee. The fact is most of us are both. Thich Nhat Hahn once counseled, “[y]ou cannot transit wisdom and insight to another person.

The seed is already there. A good teacher touches the seed, allowing it to wake up, to sprout, and to grow.” May you be the seed, and the teacher.

– *Strive* editors



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INTERVIEW WITH SARAH POWELL, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, GENERAL COUNSEL AND SECRETARY OF FOCUS BRANDS

Interviewed by [Linda Klein](#), 404.221.6530, lklein@bakerdonelson.com



TELL US ABOUT SOME OF THE LEADERSHIP POSITIONS YOU HELD IN YOUR CAREER AND HOW YOU ACHIEVED THOSE POSITIONS.

My first true leadership position was as an assistant general counsel (AGC) at Delhaize America after serving as a staff attorney for the five years prior. As the AGC, I oversaw all of the real estate transactions, litigation, contractual matters, and other miscellaneous matters, including significant acquisitions.

After several years at Delhaize, I moved to Advance Auto Parts as a director level senior attorney. I oversaw all real estate transactional and litigation matters, engaged in contract negotiations, and led mergers and acquisitions. I was fortunate enough that my employer sent me to a one-year women's leadership program, which included an incredibly enlightening 360-degree analysis of how other employees at the company saw me. The analysis, along with techniques I learned in the program, strengthened my leadership capabilities. As my role with acquisitions increased and the legal department grew, I was promoted to vice president. I gained invaluable experience in managing a team during this time, learning what did and did not work well in keeping people engaged as part of the team.

When the general counsel left the company, I was appointed as the acting general counsel, and they began the search for the new general counsel. I learned as much as I could about the position, and I knew I needed to use my new position to gain experience in securities and employment law. In addition, I took on litigation matters that I had not been involved in before, prioritized cases, and reduced legal expenses. I also worked with the team of my peers, who were suddenly reporting to me, to make our roles easier by eliminating silos on the team. After a few months, I threw my hat in the ring for

general counsel and obtained the position based upon my performance and leadership assessments conducted by the company. At various times as the senior vice president, general counsel and secretary, I managed teams of 20 – 100 people, drawing upon my prior management experience and learning new leadership techniques to keep the teams engaged.

I was the senior vice president, general counsel and corporate secretary at Advance Auto Parts for six years before transitioning to my current role as executive vice president, general counsel and secretary at Focus Brands three years ago. I obtained the Focus Brands role following a call from a recruiter. At Focus Brands, I am part of the executive team and play an important role in guiding the direction of our business. I continue to learn and refine leadership techniques every day.

HOW DO YOU PUT TOGETHER YOUR IDEAL LEGAL TEAM? DOES DIVERSITY PLAY A ROLE?

The first thing I search for in a member of our legal team is solid knowledge of the legal area or areas in which the team member will interact with the business. Once I confirm that, I focus on the person's fit with the legal team and the company's business teams. I search for people who are interested in honing their legal skills as well as learning about the business and incorporating that learning into their legal decisions. In addition, I search for people who are collaborative, have integrity, and are open to questions and challenges from our business people. If an attorney is arrogant or believes that they know all the answers, that person is not a good fit for our company. Diversity definitely plays a role in putting together the ideal team. Diversity of the people within the team contributes to more diverse and innovative ideas and solutions for the team, and strengthens the team's results.

INTERVIEW WITH SARAH POWELL, *continued*

ARE THERE ANY REAL “DON'TS” WHEN IT COMES TO WORKING YOUR WAY UP THE CORPORATE OR PROFESSIONAL LADDER?

- Don't underestimate yourself. Take on challenges that cause you to be uncomfortable. That is the best way to grow, even if you fail at a challenge sometimes.
- Don't always talk. Take the time to listen to what others are saying, and make sure you take their viewpoints into account, too.
- Don't go too far into the weeds when you are talking with senior leaders as you work your way up the corporate ladder. Keep your points concise and at a high level.

WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE PIECES OF ADVICE YOU WOULD GIVE TO AN ASPIRING FEMALE PROFESSIONAL?

1. Always keep learning new areas of your professional specialty and continue learning about your business.

2. Keep up with new developments in the business world, and read the *Wall Street Journal* and business journals.
3. Don't be afraid to make a decision. The general counsel at my first in-house job at Delhaize America told me that not making a decision can often be far worse for you and the business than making a wrong decision that you can fix later.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS YOU HAVE PARTICIPATED IN AS A MENTOR OR MENTEE?

- Both the mentor and the mentee listen sincerely to the other's concerns and recommendations.
- Honest feedback on performance and the viability of ideas.
- The mentor and the mentee prepare for their sessions to ensure they are as productive as possible.

HOW WE BUILT A MENTORING PROGRAM THAT ACTUALLY WORKS



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Since its inception in 2005, the Baker Donelson Women's Initiative has included a mentoring component for the Firm's women attorneys. Over the years, our Women's Initiative has listened to the concerns of our women attorneys and learned how to best equip them with the mentoring relationships most beneficial to them and their career development. Based on this feedback, the Firm introduced a revamped, multi-faceted program in 2015. With a few years and even more feedback under our belt, we hope our journey to develop a robust mentoring program will help you create or expand women's mentoring networks at your company.

The need for formal mentoring relationships for women is supported by strong statistical evidence. Research shows there is a positive correlation between strong mentoring programs and women's advancement in law firms. It should be no surprise that more support from accomplished women can contribute to one's success and advancement. The 2014 National Association for Women Lawyers (NAWL) report identified the key obstacles to the retention and promotion of women in law firms, including lack of mentors for women in leadership, attrition as women leave firms for better opportunities, work-life balance issues, and lack of business

MENTORING PROGRAM, *continued*

development opportunities. With these obstacles in mind, we set out to create a mentoring program that (1) ensures every woman lawyer and advisor has multiple options and avenues for mentoring at the Firm; (2) creates an environment in which women receive feedback and advice to help them take ownership of their careers and advance within the Firm and the profession; and (3) develop a Firm culture that supports and values mentoring.

After conducting several focus groups throughout the Firm's offices and honing in on our women attorneys' concerns, we found there is not a "one-size-fits-all" model. In the same way that each person has different ideas and expectations about their careers, each person has different mentoring needs. Reports from our focus groups revealed there are varying opinions, interest levels, and requested types of mentoring. We concluded that the best approach is to offer our women attorneys and advisors a menu of options and opportunities in order to develop meaningful mentoring relationships. The Women's Initiative constructed four overarching options and avenues for mentoring.

1 ONE-ON-ONE MENTORING. Baker Donelson facilitates a robust mentoring program for our associates, staff attorneys, and of counsel when they join the Firm, and many individual lawyers have organic one-on-one mentoring relationships. In addition, some of our women attorneys and advisors expressed they would appreciate an additional, dedicated Women's Initiative mentor. The idea is simple – mentors and mentees can discuss their careers and obtain advice and encouragement on an ongoing basis. The focus here is on productive relationships. The Women's Initiative was careful not to make anyone feel pressured to say "yes" to one-on-one mentoring merely because it is offered. In fact, surveys revealed many of our women prefer larger mentoring groups (discussed more fully below), rather than an assigned individual. For those who seek a dedicated mentor, the Women's Initiative endeavored to pair each interested individual with a mentor after discussion about that individual's preferences and needs. For example, a mentee may prefer a mentor in her practice area or located in another office to help expand her network.

2 TOPIC MENTORS. The Women's Initiative asked our male and female shareholders to let us know if they would be willing to provide advice on specific topics, including work-life balance, business development, community and professional associations, and leadership. All of our attorneys and advisors are encouraged to contact topic mentors, who we list on the Firm's intranet. Serving as a topic mentor is a great option for attorneys interested in serving as a mentor, but who may not feel they are able to commit to dedicated, individual mentoring assignments.

3 MENTORING CIRCLES. The mentoring circles provide opportunities for peer mentoring and broader discussions of issues of concern and interest for participants. The Women's Initiative Mentoring Committee provides our Women's Initiative Office Leaders with guidance on the frequency and timing of meetings, monthly discussion facilitation guides, and best practices from other offices. Our mentoring circles vary in size, with some offices including all women attorneys and advisors and others hosting smaller circles that may include five members. Our Office Leaders adjust the frequency and timing of meetings based on regular feedback we solicit from our women attorneys. Some circles host "Coffee and Cocktail Talks," which alternate between morning meetings at coffee shops near the office and happy hours at new, hip bars or restaurants. Other circles host "Cupcake Breaks" and walk to local bakeries mid-afternoon for discussions over sweet treats.

4 RANDOM LUNCH GROUPINGS. Modeled after a program developed in the Firm's Atlanta office, the Women's Initiative works with each office's managing shareholder and Women's Initiative Office Leader to implement quarterly lunch groupings of three to four lawyers, including men and women. The Women's Initiative's focus groups revealed that these periodic, random lunch groupings build camaraderie, aid the integration of women attorneys, and provide opportunities for lawyers in different practice groups at varying stages of their careers to connect as well as potentially foster natural mentoring relationships. Every other month, small groups of attorneys chosen at random are asked to have lunch together and the most junior attorney in the group is tasked with scheduling.

MENTORING PROGRAM, *continued*

Attorneys are encouraged to get to know one another, discuss their practices and clients, and actively pursue opportunities to collaborate. Notably, this program requires no budget and minimal time commitment.

All of these offerings take work and commitment. With 22 offices, we face challenges to coordinate and maintain momentum. We are fortunate to have strong support for our Women's Initiative mentoring program, as well as lots of fantastic mentors willing to share their experiences and provide advice and counsel. We continue to make adjustments as we monitor what is working and what is not, and will strive to listen to and meet the changing needs of our lawyers.

Beyond the basic tenets of our mentoring program, we receive questions frequently about how the program truly works. Here are the questions that we receive regularly:

Why offer mentoring through the Women's Initiative when the Firm already has a mentoring program facilitated by the Professional Development Department?

Mentoring is important to the development of women lawyers. A national survey conducted by NAWL revealed a lack of mentors for women was a key obstacle to retention and promotion of women in the workplace.

What are some of the ways that mentoring can enhance one's career options?

- Mentoring helps attorneys develop expertise, knowledge, skills, and abilities.
- Mentors are critical to successful integration into the Firm.
- Mentors can provide behind-the-scenes information about organizational politics that more junior attorneys may not be privy to typically.
- Mentees benefit tremendously from one-on-one support.
- Mentoring allows an attorney to have an advocate with a larger voice within the Firm.

Are mentoring relationships successful when the mentor and mentee are located in different offices of the Firm?

Yes. The Women's Initiative found that inter-office mentoring can be very successful. It may be the case that the lawyer who is the "best" fit to mentor a mentee is in another office. Among other benefits, these mentor-mentee pairings provide the mentee with the opportunity to expand her network and offer a fresh viewpoint.

I'm interested in establishing a mentoring program at my workplace. Can I contact you for more information about mentoring best practices?

[Kristine Roberts](#) and [Tiye Foley](#) co-chair the Women's Initiative Mentoring Committee. Please contact us at klroberts@bakerdonelson.com and tfoley@bakerdonelson.com to discuss your workplace's mentoring needs.

How can attorneys participate in mentoring without over-stretching themselves?

Attorneys concerned about over committing should consider being willing to take questions now and then. We introduced our topic-mentoring program to allow busy attorneys to make themselves available, as needed, to provide one-on-one advice and answer questions on specific topics on an ad hoc basis. Attorneys tap into topic mentors periodically, so this role should not be particularly burdensome.

What topics should mentors discuss with their mentees?

We have found that successful mentoring relationships take many different forms, and each mentoring pair should communicate regularly to chart their own path. Mentoring discussions may include goals and plans for the future, strategies for developing new client relationships, how to balance competing workplace demands, how to become more involved in the community and/or bar associations, and how to develop leadership skills. The sky is the limit!

MENTORING PROGRAM, *continued*

Mentees should be proactive in letting the mentor know of particular mentoring needs or areas of concern and interest. Each month, we disseminate discussion topics to the Firm's Women's Initiative Office Leaders, with the goal of sparking mentoring conversations.

How often should mentors and mentees meet?

The frequency of meetings is purely at the discretion of each mentor-mentee pairing, although the advice and encouragement mentors provide should be ongoing.

Ultimately, we have found that the need for mentoring relationships ebbs and flows throughout a career, and different needs arise dependent upon the phase of life. We believe that knowing they have a support system available helps our women attorneys and advisors to combat issues that may otherwise lead to attrition and encourages our attorneys to take charge of their own careers. We hope that these lessons aid in the development of a mentoring program that works for your organization.

BACK TO BASICS: MENTORING TOPICS THAT SPARK REAL CONVERSATIONS

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Mentoring is a core component of the mission of the Baker Donelson Women's Initiative. The goal of this program is to cultivate our Firm's female talent at all levels by maximizing career development and leadership opportunities through guidance, support, and networking.

A significant part of our mentoring program focuses on gathering to discuss monthly mentoring topics, with each office implementing the program differently. For example, in the Atlanta office, our mentoring circle meets monthly over coffee and focuses part of our discussion on a particular topic. Group mentoring allows for women to peer mentor each other. It also gives us the opportunity to develop organic mentoring and sponsorship relationships out of routine interactions with women at varying levels of experience.

Hopefully these interactions provide all women with the resources they need to develop management and leadership skills, grow within their profession, and network with other women attorneys. Examples of monthly discussion topics include time management, client communication and counseling, developing a network, working with difficult people, developing short and long-term career goals, managing stress, and building visibility.

This month, we are tackling the following questions:

- Can you name a person who has had a major impact on how you practice law? Why and how did this person impact your practice?
- What is the one behavior or quality that distinguishes a great young attorney from a good one?
- What is the one mistake you find that young lawyers make more often than others?
- How do you ensure you stay current with legal trends and continue to develop as an attorney?
- What trends do you see developing in the legal profession over the next few years, and how can you get in front of them?
- What opportunities do you recommend I seek to develop my verbal and written communication skills?
- Which professional or pro bono service organizations do you feel are the most important to be involved in?

If you have ideas for mentoring topics, please share them with your friends at Baker Donelson or me! We'd love your feedback.

Sarah-Nell Walsh is the co-editor of Strive and the Women's Initiative Office Leader for Baker Donelson's Atlanta office. Send her your ideas for mentoring topics at swalsh@bakerdonelson.com.

MAKING THE MOST OF IN-HOUSE MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS WITH ANNA HARTOG, ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL AT EDWARD JONES

Interviewed by [Catherine C. Long](#), 205.244.3858, clong@bakerdonelson.com

Can you tell us about the attributes of the most successful relationships you've participated in as mentor or mentee?

There should be a manageable universe of clear objectives, in the range of one to three, identifying what the mentor and mentee hope to get out of the relationship. For example, one objective might be building relationships with certain stakeholders in the organization. Another objective might be practicing a certain skill or competency that is key for the mentee's role.

What is the best advice you received from a mentor?

Early in my career, a mentor at my law firm took me aside and told me that I would need to be a steward for my own career. What he meant is that career development and progression don't happen by accident. He encouraged me to be intentional in thinking about my own professional development and goals, and not to be afraid to speak up about my goals. In essence, the advice was not to wait for someone to tap me on the shoulder, but instead, to self-advocate respectfully for development and career opportunities.

How do you think mentoring relationships differ once you are in-house?

In private law practice, there is one path of career progression from associate to partner, and most mentor relationships are between an associate and partner. In corporate environments, there are a myriad of developmental and career paths that an in-house lawyer might take, and it often makes sense to seek out mentoring relationships with individuals who aren't lawyers and who don't sit in the Legal Department. Having a non-attorney mentor who sits outside Legal can offer a different perspective that can assist the attorney in his/her current role and may also lead to creative thinking about developmental opportunities or career paths that an attorney had not considered previously. For those who are in-house, it is worthwhile to explore the mentoring programs your organization has outside of the Legal Department.

If you serve as a mentor, how did that relationship originate?

I am currently mentoring a junior attorney at one of our outside firms through a formal mentoring arrangement. In addition to clearly defined objectives for the relationship, my mentee has valued having access to an in-house attorney as she works to develop her client development and relationship skills.

How have your mentors helped to shape your career path?

I have had the good fortune to have mentoring relationships evolve into sponsorship/advocacy. While this is not the goal of a mentoring relationship, it can develop organically in a way that really benefits the mentee.

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BAKER'S DOZEN – HOW TO GET SERIOUS ABOUT SPONSORING WOMEN

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It remains unfortunate – but true – that men hold a disproportionately large percentage of the power positions in the world, “meaning there are not enough powerful women sponsors available yet to sponsor all of the ambitious deserving women,” according to Ida Abbott, researcher and author of *Sponsoring Women – What Men Need to Know*. How can this statistic change? Abbott stresses that companies that are serious about growing top female talent must encourage direct, personal involvement by its male leaders to act with determination in ensuring women have the same career-elevating experiences and opportunities that men have.

While mentoring programs remain an important component of most companies’ training and development programming, Yuliya Laroe noted in her article “Why Women Lawyers Need Sponsors, Not Just Mentors” “that a mentor can only take you so far.” Mentors focus on development, not advancement, typically. To achieve measurable progress in developing a sustainable pipeline of women leaders, a firm must be intentional in challenging and equipping its existing leadership to undertake individualized sponsor relationships and “serve as a catalyst for cultural transformation,” according to Abbott. In their book *The CEO Next Door*, Elena Bothelho and Kim Powell note that there are steps that women proactively can take to identify a sponsor and help grow that relationship.

What is Sponsorship?

According to Laroe, a sponsor is “someone who uses chips on his or her protégé’s behalf and advocates for his or her next promotion.” Laroe asserts that a “brick wall/glass ceiling/iron curtain” exists “when it comes to senior leadership and management positions.” Laroe also notes that a sponsor is a “champion who promotes you and your talents at the partnership or management level.” An active sponsor intentionally focuses on building a vibrant relationship with their younger colleague, gaining

knowledge, and understanding of the protégé’s passions, interests, and talents. Then, the sponsor is in the position to identify opportunities and advocate for their colleague, including (i) expanding the perceptions of what their protégé can do, (ii) making connections to senior leaders, (iii) promoting his or her visibility, (iv) opening up career opportunities, (v) offering advice on executive presence, (vi) making connections outside the company, and (vii) giving career advice.

Laroe believes that an ideal sponsor is your “person on the inside...someone who will not just vote in your favor, but will also make the affirmative effort to convince their partners to do the same.” A sponsor offers guidance on career decisions, strategic choices, and access to clients and senior leaders. Bothelho and Powell note that support from an influential sponsor can accelerate a woman’s path within an organization, as sponsors “take action, provide valuable access and effectively lend you their credibility.” Companies need to take the serious action to step up and build sponsorship into its fabric, including management measurement, review, and compensation.

What Male Leaders Can Do to Sponsor Women

Even when women try to get ahead using the same career advancement strategies as men and do “all the right things,” they earn less and progress more slowly than men,” said Abbott. This disparity is traced back to the phenomenon of men getting sponsored at rates that far surpass women. Once sponsors are identified as what Abbott calls “powerful backers who identify high performers and actively champion their advancement,” it becomes easier to fathom that a sponsor could make all the difference in a career. While firms have a corporate responsibility to nurture diversity programs and initiatives, male leaders have a very personal responsibility to change the ingrained norms and “serve as catalysts for cultural transformation” by pushing for gender balance and investing in the sponsorship of women.

BAKER'S DOZEN, *continued*

Male leaders can intentionally and effectively sponsor women following several practical suggestions in *Sponsoring Women*, including:

- Clarifying the purpose and goals of the relationship;
- Developing an individualized strategy;
- Explaining how to get ahead – including the unwritten rules;
- Priming her for leadership;
- Inviting her to important networks;
- Encouraging her to stretch; and
- Focusing on opportunities to showcase her strengths.

A starting point for every male leader is to read Abbott's book and determine how best to apply it. The suggestions given in the book are a helpful road map for charting a course for a sponsoring relationship. But, at the core, each sponsorship relationship will be its own individualized experiment.

As further guidance for what leaders can do to help advance women in their respective groups or teams, Baker Donelson leaders provided the following practical ways they advocate and support the women in their groups:

- 1.** I have found that having a 15-minute recurring mid-week calendar appointment for an in-office "coffee break" with a female protégé provides a tangible reminder to check in, chart progress, and strategize.
- 2.** Be consciously aware of distributing opportunities that come across your desk equally. As an example, when I was approached about speaking at a regional seminar, I was able to turn one speaking engagement into two presentations, both led by women lawyers. I also enlisted a female associate to assist with preparation for the presentation to help her with credentialing.
- 3.** I spend time teaching the women in my group the business and administrative side of our Firm and practice group. This included how to figure a margin; what to look at when considering alternative fees; what metrics must be calculated to manage a practice; and the management organization of our Firm.
- 4.** I identify a woman for any leadership role that comes up in the group, whether it is client-related, firm-related, or some other initiative. I want Baker Donelson to be a leader in having more women in leadership positions. By creating a pathway to leadership, when future opportunities arise, there will be multiple women with leadership experience to step in.
- 5.** I identify networking organizations, such as bar associations, inns of court, and bank and accounting firm events, for women associates to join, and then accompanied them to the initial meeting to encourage them to participate actively in the organization.
- 6.** I schedule lunch every month with all the women associates and of counsel in our office to get to know one another better.
- 7.** I proactively promote women within my practice group, including asking women to lead training programs, making the Women's Initiative an agenda item during retreats, and identifying women who could be a potential leader as my successor and providing them leadership opportunities and training.
- 8.** I sponsor a woman associate in my practice group, including proactive work on her advancement towards shareholder and in her career. In addition, I identified a woman associate in my office, who is not in my practice group, to sponsor, and to help her progress and understand how to succeed within the Firm.
- 9.** I recommend women associates for participation in leadership opportunities in the community and Firm.
- 10.** I created a sponsor relationship with a young woman in another office, and I have a monthly call to discuss on what's going on in our offices, practices, and in life generally.
- 11.** When we have women returning from maternity leave in our practice group, I contact all the partners with whom she has worked to make sure they know the date she is returning and affirmatively make sure that there is sufficient work lined up so that she can hit the ground running the day she steps back into the office.

BAKER'S DOZEN, *continued*

12. I met with our female shareholders and asked them to help me recruit the top women lawyers in town. As a result, we have recruited a number of outstanding women in the last few years.

13. We actively promote our women in the community by nominating them for awards. A number of our female lawyers have been recognized as “Best of the Bar” and “Women of Influence.”

What Women Can Do to Build a Sponsor Relationship?

Commentators also suggest that there are multiple actions that women seeking a sponsor relationship can take to initiate the process. In their book, Bothelho and Powell describe four behaviors that transform ordinary people into world-class leaders, and outline specific steps that women can take to help “build your tribe.”

First and foremost, great performances create sponsorships. Laroe notes that it is important to develop quality relationships with a potential sponsor. Quality relationships begin when you identify one or more key partners within the firm (and not just in your home office) and look for opportunities to connect with those identified. Key opportunities include working with the potential sponsor on a matter, or getting involved in a volunteer organization in which they are involved. If they are involved in a firm initiative, see how you can help them succeed in their efforts. The bottom line is that “before someone decides to take you on as a protégé (meaning be willing to put their reputation on the line for you) they need to know you and trust you.”

In addition to doing great work, Bothelho and Powell stress some specific tactics to get noticed and cultivate sponsorships:

- Share your aspirations. Rather than share problems or issues, talk about your aspirations. This “creates positive energy and demonstrates that your goals are aligned with the business’s and the sponsor’s objectives.”

- Ask for advice. If you want to get someone to feel invested in your success, “give her easy opportunities to contribute to it.” Advice is a powerful sponsor-building approach. Later, follow up with the sponsor to know how the situation played out and how their advice helped you.

- Make clear and specific requests that are easy for your sponsor to fulfill. One example is asking a senior partner to bring you along on a client visit.

- Provide sincere gratitude to your sponsor. It is important to “acknowledge anything they did that helped you – no matter how small.” Thank them for advice regarding an opportunity they provided and share how it made a difference.

- When you ask for a sponsor’s help, “don’t drop the ball.” Make sure to follow through. Take the ball and run with it.

- “Bring rare goods.” The authors make the point that one way to “break into closed networks and attract sponsorship is to offer new, needed skills.” Invest in building valuable expertise and become known as an expert.

Leaders must get more serious about sponsorship if they want to move their company forward and out-perform competitors. This will only happen if senior leaders, and in particular male senior leaders, become intentional about sponsoring a protégé. It will take time, effort, and serious commitment, but it will be among the most rewarding actions you take. You will get better as a firm with increased, diverse viewpoints among senior leadership. What’s more, if you are a rising woman, there are steps described above that you can take to increase your leadership skills, access, and long-term success. Importantly, we must all take action now to build a better tomorrow.

20 QUESTIONS WITH BOBBIE STRATTON, WOMEN'S INITIATIVE HOUSTON OFFICE LEADER



[Bobbie L. Stratton](mailto:bstratton@bakerdonelson.com), 713.286.7168, bstratton@bakerdonelson.com

1. If you weren't a lawyer, what would you be?

I would probably own a dance studio.

2. What are the three qualities that got you where you are today?

Perseverance, patience, and hard work.

3. What was the moment you felt you made it?

That has not happened, yet. I still have too many major goals to feel that way. Maybe when I retire. Knowing me, though, probably never.

4. What change would you like to see in the legal industry?

Better work-life balance for working mothers. "Work-life balance" is a phrase used and implemented differently across the industry (and everywhere, really), and I see so many more strides needed. Baker Donelson does an amazing job at allowing flexibility to be a master at both motherhood and the practice of law, but there are still so many challenges. A great example is our courthouses in Houston. If you are a nursing mother, there are zero places to pump if you have to be in court for an extended period of time. Not having that can negatively impact many things with your little one. It's a contributing factor to the struggle. After my youngest daughter was born, thank goodness for the kindness of the clerk of the court where I was in trial. Otherwise, there's no telling how I would have made it through that week.

5. How did you make your first dollar?

I babysat my brother, sister, and family friend's kids when I was in middle school. They paid me \$20.

6. What was the last thing you binge-watched?

I'm catching up on the end of last season's *This is Us*. I just finished the Super Bowl episode!

7. What book left a lasting impression on you?

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, by Stephen R. Covey. It was part of a training course when I was first out of college. The lessons come back up all the time.

8. What movie has the greatest ending?

The Sixth Sense. It totally got me.

9. What food are you not ashamed to admit you love?

Potatoes. It's a love/hate relationship.

10. If you could live abroad, where would it be?

Paris, for sure!

11. What is one thing you're exceptionally good at?

Patience at helping others figure things out.

12. What is one thing you're epically bad at?

Keeping my house clean. It's a never-ending circle of stuff.

13. What superhero power would you want to have?

I'd love to be psychic.

14. What is something that's better in theory than in practice?

Negotiating with my 4 year old. She's the baby, so we all give her way too much leeway.

15. What store can you not leave without buying something?

Target.

16. How do you clear your mind after a bad day?

I watch T.V.

17. If you could compete in an Olympic sport, what would it be?

Figure skating because it's the best combination of dance and sport.

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20 QUESTIONS, *continued*

18. What are three qualities you thought you wanted in a partner? Laughter, strength in character, and love.

19. What are three qualities you now know matter? Patience, ability to communicate, and kindness.

20. What relationship advice would you give to your younger self? Take the time to have more fun. Go on the adventures. There is less time in the future than you thought there would be.

OFFICE UPDATES



In case you missed it, Baker Donelson's summer associates were up to the challenge when we asked them to take charge of our [Women's Initiative Instagram](#) account for the #BDSummerTakeover. Check out all the fun they had on our Instagram page: [bakerdonelsonwomen](#)



The women in our Knoxville office hosted a small group dinner in May at Kitchen 919 in Bearden. The clients raved about the relaxed atmosphere and the chance to speak with other female professionals.



Our Memphis women attorneys and summer associates gathered at Malco Ridgeway Cinema Grill to view the documentary [RBG](#), which explores U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's legal legacy.

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OFFICE UPDATES, *continued*



[Jennifer Hall](#) (center), a shareholder in our Jackson office, served on the panel of business leaders at the [Women's Foundation of Mississippi Thrive @ Work](#) event on July 31 to discuss inventive workplace parental leave policies and positive impacts for both the employee and employer. Baker Donelson was a proud sponsor of the event.



[Comedy for a Cause](#)
Thursday, September 13
5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. ET
The Press Room
730 North Broadway Street
Knoxville, TN 37917

JOIN US AT COMEDY FOR A CAUSE IN KNOXVILLE!

Comedy for a Cause is a fun evening of laughter and fellowship benefiting the Gynecologic Cancers Education and Research Fund at The University of Tennessee Medical Center's Cancer Institute. This impactful event includes a silent auction, heavy hors d'oeuvres, cocktails, and a comedy show featuring Leanne Morgan. To learn more about the event and to purchase tickets, [click here](#). Gynecologic cancer patients and survivors receive one complimentary ticket.

Baker Donelson is proud to be the Founding Sponsor of Comedy for a Cause.

WELCOME BAKER DONELSON'S NEW SHAREHOLDER CLASS

In April, Baker Donelson announced that it elected 11 new shareholders, including the following six women:



[Eve A. Cann](#)
*Consumer Finance
and Litigation*



[Jennifer L. Curry](#)
Labor & Employment



[Nakimuli O. Davis-Primer](#)
Labor & Employment



[Kathleen G. Furr](#)
*Corporate Restructuring
and Bankruptcy*



[Ashley Hugunine](#)
Real Estate and Finance



[Melanie C. Walker](#)
Immigration

This year's class of new shareholders is comprised of more than 50 percent women, making it the fourth consecutive year women have made up nearly or more than half of the Firm's newly elected shareholders. Additionally, nearly half of the new shareholders, including men and women, have taken advantage of Baker Donelson's industry-leading parental leave policy during their time at the Firm.

NEW FEMALE FACES

Baker Donelson is proud to announce the addition of the women attorneys featured below to our team.

BALTIMORE



[Jean W. Frydman](#)
Intellectual Property

CHATTANOOGA



[Kathryn F. MacGregor](#)
Health Law

FORT LAUDERDALE



[Melissa A. Goldman](#)
Health Law



[Jodi B. Laurence](#)
Health Law

HOUSTON



[Jackie S. Wilhite](#)
Advocacy

NASHVILLE



[Jennifer G. Cook](#)
Labor & Employment

NEW ORLEANS



[Tessa P. Vorhaben](#)
Business Litigation

BAKER DONELSON WOMEN IN THE NEWS Exciting Recognitions of the Achievements of Our Women's Initiative and Our Women Attorneys

WORKING MOTHER MAGAZINE "BEST LAW FIRMS FOR WOMEN"

Baker Donelson was named by *Working Mother* magazine to its 11th annual "Best Law Firms for Women" list, recognizing firms that utilize best practices in retaining and promoting women lawyers. The [2018 Working Mother "Best Law Firms for Women"](#) list highlights law firms where, on average, almost half of associates and more than a third of partners are women, while one-fifth of equity partners are women. These firms also increasingly offer extended parental-leave benefits and encourage more lawyers to work remotely and use flexible hours.

WILEF 2018 GOLD STANDARD CERTIFICATION

For the fourth consecutive year, [Women in Law Empowerment Forum \(WILEF\)](#) has certified Baker Donelson as a Gold Standard Firm. WILEF grants Gold Standard status to firms that meet objective criteria concerning the number of women attorneys who are equity partners; who serve as heads of the firm, its offices and practice groups or departments; who serve on the firm's primary governance committee; and who serve on the committee that determines equity partner compensation. Baker Donelson was among 42 law firms across the country to earn this certification.

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BAKER DONELSON WOMEN IN THE NEWS, *continued*

CHAMBERS WOMEN IN LAW AWARDS FINALIST

Baker Donelson was named one of six finalists for the prestigious award, [Outstanding Firm in Advancing Gender Diversity and Inclusion, by the Chambers Women in Law Awards: USA 2018](#). This coveted award recognizes a firm's concerted efforts to promote a working environment that strongly cultivates the values of a diverse workforce, driving the firm forward with its diversity and inclusion programs. The Chambers Women in Law Awards are designed to recognize companies who have achieved dramatic improvements in gender equality, women's advancement, and inclusion in the legal profession.

Through its Women's Initiative, Baker Donelson has implemented numerous key initiatives designed to create an environment where female attorneys thrive, including an industry-leading parental leave policy, a firm-wide mentoring program for women, a program that awards business development grants to women attorneys, and a training program designed to help women attorneys achieve equity shareholder status. Women serve in key leadership roles across the Firm. Currently, women serve as president and COO, on the board of directors, as office managing shareholders, as department chairs, and as practice group leaders.



Pictured: Desi Franklin, Senior Vice President, Assistant General Counsel with First Horizon National Corporation, and Christy Tosh Crider, chair of Baker Donelson's Women's Initiative at the Chambers Women in Law Awards: USA 2018. First Horizon National Corporation was a finalist for the award, "Outstanding Company in Advancing Gender Diversity and Inclusion."

JULIE KASS RECEIVES BAKER DONELSON'S 2018 SUSAN E. RICH AWARD



Baker Donelson recognized [Julie E. Kass](#) with the Firm's 2018 Susan E. Rich Award for excellence in the promotion of and commitment to women in the legal profession.

"Julie has long focused on supporting and promoting women both within our Firm and beyond," said Christy Tosh Crider, chair of Baker Donelson's [Women's Initiative](#). "She has encouraged, mentored, and promoted numerous young women attorneys. As one of the leading health care lawyers in the nation, she serves as an inspiring example of a lawyer who is recognized for both her excellence as a practitioner and her dedication to making both her professional and personal communities better places to live and work."

Ms. Kass is co-chair of the Firm's Health Law Group and a shareholder in our Baltimore office, and she focuses her practice on the fraud and abuse aspects of Medicare and Medicaid, including the federal Stark and Anti-Kickback laws, OIG exclusion authorities and civil money penalties. She previously served as senior counsel with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Counsel to the Inspector General, and Industry Guidance Branch. Ms. Kass is a member of the American Health Lawyers Association (AHLA), where she helped to create the Women's Leadership Council. She also served as chair of the AHLA's Physician Organizations Practice Group and is current chair of the

BAKER DONELSON WOMEN IN THE NEWS, *continued*

Physicians and Hospitals Law Institute Program Planning Committee. She is actively involved in the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, where she was part of the leadership of the Women’s Business and Professional Group. Ms. Kass has been recognized as a leading health care attorney by *The Best Lawyers in America*, *Chambers USA*, and *Washington, D.C. Super Lawyers*.

Baker Donelson established the Susan E. Rich Award in honor of Susan Elliot Rich, a shareholder in the Firm’s Chattanooga, Tennessee office, who was the Firm’s first woman shareholder, the first woman to be appointed an office managing shareholder, and the first woman appointed to the Firm’s board of directors. This award is given annually to a recipient who exemplifies ongoing commitment and effort to strengthen the role of women attorneys at the Firm.

JENNIFER COOPER RECEIVES BAKER DONELSON’S 2018 WORK-LIFE WARRIOR AWARD



Baker Donelson has recognized [Jennifer G. Cooper](#) with the Firm’s 2018 Work-Life Warrior Award.

“In addition to successfully balancing career and family, Jennifer has an unflagging commitment to the advancement of women at Baker Donelson and to women’s issues generally,” said Christy Tosh Crider, chair of Baker Donelson’s [Women’s Initiative](#). “She works tirelessly to serve her clients, is a dedicated and engaged mother, and still dedicates time and energy to advocating for issues that are important to women in our Firm and in the legal profession.”

project management programs for companies. She has a strong commitment to the advancement and support of women in the legal profession and is active in the Firm’s Women’s Initiative, where she has served as a member of the Advisory Committee, chair of the Marketing Committee, Atlanta office liaison, and parental leave advisor, and was a founding member of the Association of Corporate Counsel Georgia Chapter Women’s Initiative Steering Committee. Ms. Cooper is a member of the International Association of Defense Counsel and has been recognized among “Georgia’s Legal Elite” by *Georgia Trend Magazine*.

A shareholder in the Firm’s Atlanta office, Ms. Cooper’s practice focuses on assisting companies and governments with ongoing legal issues and litigation matters, including coordination of nationwide litigation and development of in-house legal

Baker Donelson established the Work-Life Warrior Award to honor an attorney in the Firm who demonstrates an ongoing commitment to excellence in maintaining a healthy work-life balance or has advocated on behalf of work-life balance issues for the benefit of others.



[Lisa Borden](#) received the “Volunteer Award” from [Advocates for Human Rights](#)



[Brigid Carpenter](#) highlighted by [Nashville Business Journal](#) as a “2018 Women of Influence”



Nashville shareholders [Martha Boyd](#), [Brigid Carpenter](#), and [Tonya Grindon](#) highlighted among the [Nashville Business Journal](#) “2018 Best of the Bar”



[Caldwell Collins](#) named by the [American Bar Association](#) as one of the 2018 “Top 40 Young Lawyers on the Rise”



[Claire Cowart Haltom](#) profiled by [Nashville Medical News](#) in “Women to Watch Class of 2018”

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BAKER DONELSON WOMEN IN THE NEWS, *continued*



[Jennifer Curry](#) selected by the [Daily Record](#) as a “2018 VIP List – Very Important Professionals Successful By 40 Awards”



[Sharonda Fancher](#) selected for [Birmingham Bar Association](#) Future Leaders Forum



[Wendy Huff Ellard](#) featured among [Mississippi Business Journal](#) “Top 50 Under 40”



[Jennifer Keller](#) named among [Human Resource Executive’s® Most Powerful Employment Attorneys](#)



[Linda Klein](#) recognized by the [Daily Report](#) as “[Attorney of the Year](#)”

Linda Klein recognized with the Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys (GABWA) Zenith Award for Distinction in the Profession. [Click here](#) to view GABWA’s tribute video honoring Linda.



Linda Klein delivered the opening remarks for [Poland – U.S. Conference on the Rule of Law](#)

Linda Klein featured in the [Daily Report](#) as commencement speaker for Atlanta’s John Marshall Law School

[Kelly Overstreet Johnson](#) received the Martha Barnett Women Lawyers of Achievement Award from the Tallahassee Bar Association



Pictured: Kelly Overstreet Johnson, and Eric Milles, President of the Tallahassee Bar Association



[Kelly Overstreet Johnson](#) and [Dena Sokolow](#) named to the [2018 Edition of Florida Super Lawyers](#); [Marisa Rosen Dorrough](#) recognized as “Rising Star”



[Jenna Bedsole](#) commented on labor and employment legal hotspots in [Birmingham Business Journal](#)

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BAKER DONELSON WOMEN IN THE NEWS, *continued*



[Emily Brackstone](#) quoted in [Memphis Business Journal](#) on Memphis startups and Rise of the Rest Tour



[Beth Liner](#) quoted in [Baton Rouge Business Report](#) on recent Supreme Court ruling regarding class action waivers



[Alisa Chestler](#) comments on how employers are preparing for GDPR in [Bloomberg Law](#)



[Amy Mahone](#) featured in [University of Tennessee College of Law](#) article about mentoring law school students



[Doreen Edelman](#) discusses CFIUS legislation in [Bloomberg BNA](#)



[Dilnaz Saleem](#) comments on impact of Supreme Court's travel ban ruling in [Lawyer Monthly](#)

Doreen Edelman quoted in [Foreign Policy](#) and in [Law360](#) about the Trump Administration's decision to implement steel and aluminum tariffs



[Sarah-Nell Walsh](#) Quoted in [Credit Union Journal](#) and in [American Banker](#) on a financial industry petition to the FCC on robocall lawsuits

Doreen Edelman quoted in [Caixin Global](#) on Congressional efforts to stop the Trump Administration's deal with ZTE



[Emily Wein](#) discussed telehealth billing options in [Part B News](#)



[Daily Business Review](#) highlights addition of [Jodi Laurence](#) and [Melissa Goldman](#) to Baker Ober Health Law Group

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