

Table of Contents

[How and Why I Went for It](#)

[Q&A with Laura Woods](#)

[Time Saver Savvy](#)

[On My Bookshelf](#)

[Women's Health Tip
– Is Sitting the New Smoking?](#)

[City Spotlight](#)

[New Faces at the Firm](#)

[Women's Initiative In The News](#)

[Baker Donelson to Participate in OnRamp Fellowship](#)

Strive

Issue 3, 2014

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How and Why I Went for It



Nancy Scott Degan

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In August, I assumed the role of chair of the American Bar Association Section of Litigation. With 400,000 members, the ABA is the largest volunteer professional association in the world, and the Section is the largest ABA entity, boasting 50,000 of those members as its own. The Section has existed for 42 years, and I am the ninth female chair. Women colleagues have asked, "How did you do that?" I respond to that question below, but because I think the more relevant question is "Why?" I provide that answer as well.

As a young partner, eight years out of law school, I saw an ad seeking editors for the Section publication, *Litigation News*. I was an avid *Litigation News* reader and thought it would be fun to write articles focused on trends and developments of importance to litigators. I also thought it would

help me keep abreast of topics about which I believed I should be knowledgeable. I asked my mentor (although we really did not call them mentors in the early '90s) if he thought it was a good idea. After receiving an encouraging response, I attended my first editorial board meeting. I was immediately hooked. The camaraderie and intellectual stimulation seduced me.

As an associate editor, I often interviewed chairs of Section committees on matters relevant to their work. This led me to volunteer to become a subcommittee chair of the Section's Business Torts Committee, which I joined because of its relevance to my practice as a commercial litigator. After a while I was asked to chair that committee. Three years later, another leadership role in the Section was offered to me. One position has led to the next, and 23 years after answering that ad, here I am.

Continue on next page

How and Why I Went for It,^{continued}

In a nutshell, I never set a goal to become the Section's chair; I simply volunteered to do something that interested me, did a good job and continued to volunteer and work hard when asked to take on additional responsibilities. I did apply to become a Section officer, but only after I felt comfortable that I had gained the experience to be effective in such a role.

Section of Litigation leadership takes a lot of time and attention. So why have I devoted a large part of my life to Section endeavors? Here are some reasons:



I like the work. The Section helps lawyers be better litigators and develop their business through its publications, CLE activities and networking events.

The Section also does important work to eliminate homelessness through pro bono legal clinics; improves access to justice for the underserved (like children and military families); and promotes diversity and inclusion in our profession through a variety of its programs.



I like the people. Even if I loved the work, I would not do it if I did not like the people.



Involvement in the Section has made me a better lawyer.



Section work has helped me develop a professional network which has resulted in referral business and enabled me to refer clients to other lawyers whom I knew would do a great job for them.



I feel as though I am making an impact. It is "nerdily thrilling" to have made contributions which have resulted in changes to the Federal Rules. It is personally gratifying to be part of an association that trains lawyers and judges on how to deal with children as witnesses and assure that they have a voice in cases involving their well-being and future. Getting involved with programs that promote diversity in the profession and help the homeless achieve independence is also incredibly fulfilling.

I share my "whys" with you to make a simple point. Volunteering at something related to your profession and which you truly enjoy often has many collateral benefits that enrich your personal and professional life. Consider volunteer opportunities in your field. If you believe you would like spending time on them and could excel at the work, go for it. Someday you may land at the top of the organization.

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Nancy Scott Degan is the 2014 – 2015 Chair of the Section of Litigation of the American Bar Association.

Things to Look Forward to Across Our Offices

Atlanta

Wrap it Up!, 12.9.14

Birmingham

Festive Fashion Affair,
11.13.14

Chattanooga

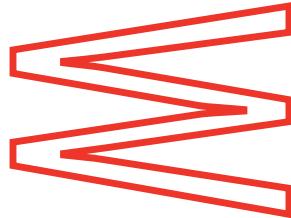
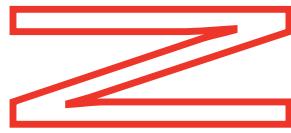
Sip and Shop, 11.5.14

Houston

Painting Event, 11.5.14

Memphis

Wrap it Up!,
December 2014



Things to Look Forward to Across Our Offices

Nashville

Wrap it Up!, 12.11.14

New Orleans

Women on Wednesdays – Cooking Demonstration, 10.22.14

Sip & Shop, 12.3.14

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Issue 3, 2014

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Q&A with Laura Woods



Laura Woods previously practiced as a partner in the labor and employment group of a full-service firm in Kingsport, Tennessee. In 2011, she joined Care Centers Management Consulting, Inc. as vice president of legal affairs. In that capacity, she assists clients in the areas of risk management, best practices recommendations and management of litigation and administrative actions.



Can you tell us about the various leadership positions you have held throughout your career and the basics of how you achieved those positions?

Presently, I am chair of the Leadership Kingsport Council, which oversees the main leadership program for the Kingsport Chamber of Commerce. I am also co-secretary of the Health Law Committee of the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC). I have also had the privilege of chairing the Chamber's youth leadership program, S.H.O.U.T.!™ and continue to be involved in that program with a social media awareness presentation for the participants each year. The Chamber's Keep Kingsport Beautiful program allowed me to serve as chair a few years ago as well. When I was new

to the practice, the Tennessee Bar Association's Young Lawyer Division's then-president Jonathan Steen tapped me to head up a new committee – the Law Student Outreach Committee.

One philosophy I hold dear is that you must be a community trustee – getting involved in organizations, serving on boards, volunteering at events, raising awareness, whatever you can do with your talents. Living in a smaller community, taking this philosophy to heart means that eventually you get asked to take on leadership roles. When I was in private practice, many attorneys in my firm were very active in community organizations, and that is probably where I was first introduced to the world of community trusteeship. I completed the Leadership Kingsport program during those early years of practice, which exposed me to many different opportunities to volunteer and become involved. I have found that once you become involved with an organization, it becomes easy to find other avenues, methods and levels for investing your talents elsewhere as well. Additionally, being social helps – I met one of my dearest friends, who is also one of the most connected people in our area, at a small music venue when I had first moved back to Kingsport. He has opened so many doors for me, including corraling me into co-hosting a local television show that just entered its 12th season.

Taking on a leadership role sometimes happens because the organization is new or just getting started. I became involved with the Health Law Committee the first year it was offered at ACC. By the second year of its existence, I had been

Q&A with Laura Woods,^{continued}

asked to serve as co-secretary and had assisted in coordinating one of the committee's continuing legal education programs at the ACC's annual meeting. Although I had not specifically expressed interest in becoming more involved in a leadership capacity, the leaders of the committee saw that I was active with the committee (I attended the conference calls, responded to surveys and email inquiries, and the like). Since the committee at that time was relatively small, I was fortunate to have name recognition with the current leadership early on, and that spring-boarded into more opportunities to serve.

 **Having been a partner at a law firm and now in-house counsel, what challenges do you think law firms face in connection with attracting and retaining promising female leaders?**

A huge challenge is providing meaningful opportunities to lead within the firm – and that could be said for any leader, regardless of gender. If you have a committee in name only, that quickly becomes obvious and can build resentment. The traditional firm structure can create impediments to keeping leaders happy. If a firm does not have a structure in place to support multiple leadership opportunities, then firms can always consider encouraging those leaders to look outside the firm for the leadership fix, and acknowledging those who take on the outside responsibilities instead of resenting them for the time the roles take away from billable time.

 **What are the challenges of being a woman at a senior level either within a law firm or in your current industry?**

One big challenge can be finding a mentor. We as a gender are making great strides into the senior level corporate world and in firms, but there are still trails to be blazed. Finding someone who has gone before you, or who has worked her way up the corporate ladder, can still be difficult. Even finding someone similarly situated can be a challenge, especially in smaller communities such as where I live and work.

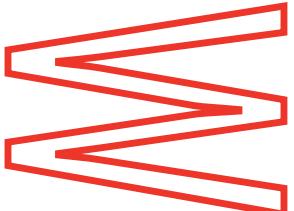
 **What advice would you give to an aspiring female professional?**

You should always have someone within your organization that you admire and can model yourself after. If you look around and can't find that person or people, then you probably are with the wrong organization. I think it is natural to always be looking for ways to improve, to feel as though you have the opportunity to grow professionally. You want to have someone to whom you can look and admire how he/she handles certain situations, dissects difficult issues, manages his/her employees and creates opportunities for growth.

Another piece of advice I would offer is to keep a work-life balance. It is easy to allow your job to define who you are, to become your identity as a person. And reining that in is easier said than done. But it is something I challenge myself to do on a constant basis.



Q&A with Laura Woods,continued



I make an effort to unplug from my work email each evening after a set time (usually once my husband and I are both home) and on the weekends as much as possible.



There will be times when a project dictates that you work more on the weekends than you normally would, but I work for those weekends to be the exceptions, not the rule. I try to maintain an active role in the community in positions that aren't necessarily equated with my profession as an attorney or my position at my company. It's also important for me to have friends who are purely social friends, not friends you have because you work together, or are in the same bar association, etc.



Are there any real no-nos when it comes to working your way up the corporate or professional ladder?

Do not undermine anyone in your organization. If you have a problem with a situation or an individual, try talking to the person involved before escalating the issue.



Can you name someone you particularly admire and tell us why?

My mom. Maybe that was a predictable answer, but she is the correct answer for me. She has taught me the importance of working hard, of valuing who you are and not allowing anything to compromise your principles, and of exhibiting patience. I have a LONG way to go on that last one.

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Time Saver Savvy – Audiobooks



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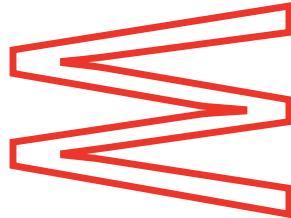
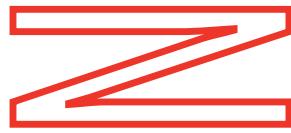
Do you think that you don't have time to read a novel or an amazing non-fiction book? Do you think there are never enough hours in the day for you to read for pleasure? Do you fall asleep as soon as you try to read at bedtime? Consider audiobooks.

Reading is a luxury many busy professionals and parents feel that they don't have time to enjoy. I have found over the last several years that I can "read" so many more books by "listening."



Audiobooks are a great time saver. I typically listen to a book on the way to and from the office during my 20 – 25 minute commute. I buy audio CDs from [Amazon.com](#) or borrow audiobooks from the library. Recently, I also have been enjoying audiobooks on my iPhone through [Audible.com](#). I download a book to my phone and can listen to the book on both my iPhone or iPad. I listen to the books while exercising, walking and even when I am getting ready for work or packing for a trip. If the book is particularly good, it is difficult to stop listening. My husband has found me spending a few extra minutes sitting in my car in the garage listening to a book after I have arrived home.

Continue on next page



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Issue 3, 2014

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Time Saver Savvy – Audiobooks , *continued*

 Listening to a book can really enhance your “reading” pleasure, particularly when you have an excellent reader or the production uses different voices for different characters. For example, in the book, *The Help*, the voices were illustrative of the characters in each chapter, such as Skeeter, a young white southern girl, and Aibileen, the middle-aged black maid. The characters seemed to come to life with their voices. *The Kite Runner* was another book I particularly enjoyed listening to because it was read by the author with his Afghan accent. It made the story even more compelling and exotic. Other fantastic books I have listened to include *The Invisible Bridge*, about a family from Hungary in the beginning of the Hitler era in Europe, *Where'd You Go, Bernadette*, a fun book told in a 15-year-old girl’s voice, and *Pillars of the Earth* and *World Without End*, two novels by Ken Follett read by a man with an English accent. His voice pulls you into England in the middle ages. *The Lost Wife* and *The Orphan Train* were other interesting books I recently enjoyed on Audible.com.



I try to move back and forth between serious books such as *In the Garden of Beasts*, a great listen, to more beach-worthy novels like *Gone Girl* or *The Husband's Secret*, both of which made

me want to stay in the car until I finished. The best part about listening to books is that even when I am the most busy with a trial or series of depositions and hearings, I can still “read” while I exercise or on the way to work. Sharing your reading experiences with others is a great conversation starter with friends, business associates and even your spouse or significant other. I am thrilled that I have discovered audiobooks so I am not limited to reading only on vacation or an airplane.

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We'd love to hear your ideas!

[Click here](#) to comment on our thread. We'll feature some of your ideas in upcoming issues.



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On My Bookshelf – *Overwhelmed: Work, Love, and Play When No One Has The Time*, by Brigid Schulte



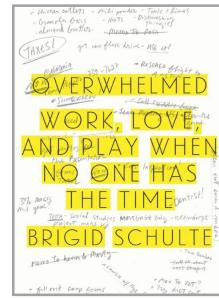
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Brigid Schulte begins this easy-to-read book that both hits home painfully and hilariously mirrors so much of the “overwhelm” of our lives, with a word picture:

It is just after 10 a.m. on a Tuesday and I am racing down Route 1 in College Park, Maryland. The Check Engine light is on. The car tax sticker on my windshield has expired. The cell phone I'd just been using to talk to one of my kids' teachers has disappeared into the seat crack. And I'm late.

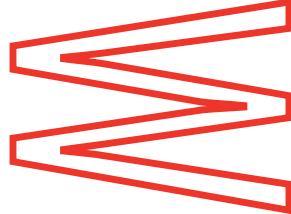
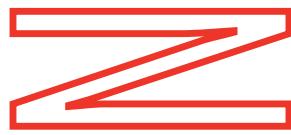
Welcome to our lives – the lives of early 21st century working women juggling responsible careers, family, home and marriage without catastrophe! How did we get here? We have the kind of lives that our mothers and grandmothers fought hard to achieve, so that we, their daughters and granddaughters, could indeed grow up to be anything we wanted, including doctors, scientists,

astronauts and, yes, even lawyers. Why are we, beneficiaries of the widest opportunities for education, good health and advancement ever known for women, living such miserable, stressed-out lives? Is it our jobs? Our families?



Schulte is an award-winning journalist for The Washington Post with two school-age daughters. She describes our modern schedules as “time confetti” – a wonderfully descriptive image. The cover of the book is a visual depiction of time confetti. Her book addresses the causes and effects of time confetti, and possible solutions.

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Issue 3, 2014

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On My Bookshelf,^{continued}



Work: The section on Work starts with the statistics. In the 1960s, about 38 percent of mothers with young children worked outside the home, and by the 2000s, 75 percent did. Totaling up the hours, the total hours of paid work by both parents was about 676 hours – or 28 days per year. Imagine adding an entire month of work to your schedule, on top of childcare, housework and the rest of our lives. Schulte then reviews the history of work and childcare in America. Part-time work is not, necessarily, the answer, as she finds when she visits the Netherlands, where a large number of mothers are able to work part-time, and finds that the time confetti is just as bad due to constant shifting of roles. She notes that our workplaces still, to a lesser or greater extent, retain a vision of the “Ideal Worker” who is free from all outside duties and able to be totally devoted to the workplace, the first to arrive in the morning and the last to leave.



Love: If there is an “Ideal Worker” model, there is also the “Ideal Mother” model which, if anything, is even more damaging to our lives. This

model makes us feel inadequate, as if our children will fail, will not get into college and will not get a good job, if we fail to do absolutely everything in our power to stimulate and nurture our children at a level unknown in past generations. She does a very effective job describing the ambivalence and inadequacy that so many of us experience as mothers and as wives.



Play: This is the section that, perhaps, seems most revolutionary. Schulte notes that active play disappears for most of us as we grow up. While men may retain a small bit of it through sports, women tend to lose all play activities, and she

cites a number of sources to the effect that play provides specific beneficial effects for us, if we only made the effort to do it. Frankly, for most of us, the idea of setting aside time for play – within the worlds of work and family that already seem to demand way more than 100 percent of our time – seems truly unrealistic.

Finally, the author gives some suggestions for how we may transform time confetti into time serenity, both on an individual basis and as a society. Her Appendix titled “Do One Thing” has a number of worthwhile thoughts. Thinking about our lives as lawyers, I think some of them, in particular, bear repeating here:

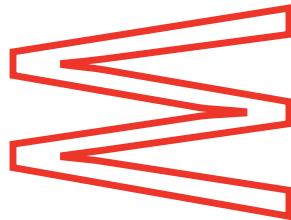
- Doing good work, having quality time for family and meaningful relationships, and the space to refresh the soul is about having a good life. It has never been just a “mommy issue.”
- Ambiguity is the enemy in the workplace that fuels the overwhelm. Define your mission. Set clear parameters and performance measures to define how much is enough.
- Remember most of your to-do list will never get done and a lot of it belongs in “the other five percent” column anyway.
- Plan. Do. Review. Find a system to manage the activities you choose to do in time that works for you. Create routines. Automate. Cut down on the number of small decisions you have to make in a day, reserving your willpower for the big decisions you really do need your full brain power to make.

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Issue 3, 2014



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On My Bookshelf,^{continued}

- Park the helicopter. You don't have to do everything on your own and better than everyone else.
- Put down the expert books. Declare the mommy wars over – we've all been on the same side in search of the good life all along.
- Happiness first. Happiness breeds success and achievement. The converse is not necessarily true.
- Don't wait until the dust bunnies are gone and the fridge is full to share time with friends.

I had the opportunity to participate in a video interview with Brigid Schulte when she visited our Baker Donelson office in Washington, D.C. Her suggestions about possible transformative changes to our career – working in the private law firm – are provocative but challenging. Many of her suggestions are probably impossible in our environment, but others are worth at least some consideration.

We in the private practice of law are dominated by the billable hour. Maybe that will change – we read article after article heralding the “death of the billable hour,” but for now, the billable hour dominates the lives of lawyers in private practice, as it dominates the lives of many other professionals. “Face time” really does matter, and exhortations to “work smarter” not “work harder” may be of only minimal use. However, we can all take individual responsibility for reviewing our lives and trying to banish the overwhelm and bring at least a measure of time serenity into our lives and the lives of our families, and many of the ideas in this book offer a good start.

What do you think?

Do you have a recommendation for a book we should review?

[Click here](#) to comment and make suggestions for future book reviews.



Women's Health Tip – Is Sitting the New Smoking?



Sarah Casey

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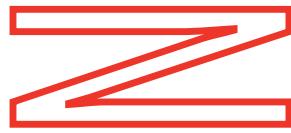
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Here is the simple truth – we are spending an inordinate amount of time sitting and it may be killing us. The average person sits more than 64 hours a week, contributing to a myriad of health problems and resulting in the coining of the phrase “sitting is the new smoking.” If you work in an office environment, it is likely that the

majority of your time at work is spent sitting; e.g., attending meetings, working on the computer, reviewing paperwork, or talking on the phone.

Human beings were not built to spend this amount of time in the seated position. Sitting for extended periods shuts the body down at a metabolic level. Our circulation slows, and we use less blood sugar, resulting in insulin resistance. We burn less fat, and we turn less bad cholesterol into good cholesterol. Sitting increases our risk of heart disease, diabetes, cancer and depression.

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Issue 3, 2014

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Women's Health Tip, *continued*

Here are some of the more frightening conclusions drawn by researchers:

- After one hour of sitting, the production of enzymes that burn fat can decline by as much as 90 percent.
- For every two hours a woman sits, she increases her risk of developing diabetes by seven percent.
- Women who sit nine or more hours a day are more likely to be depressed than those who sat fewer than six.
- A man who sits more than six hours a day has an 18 percent increased risk of dying from heart disease.

And, unfortunately, regular exercise does not absolve us from our otherwise sedentary situation (this does not, however, lessen the healthful benefits of exercise). Here is probably the most

concerning conclusion by researchers – the more time people spend sitting, the earlier they die, regardless of other factors, such as age, weight and exercise. In other words, regular exercise does not counteract the negative effect of prolonged sitting.

What can you do to stem the tide? The easiest thing you can do is take frequent breaks from sitting. Even standing and walking for just one minute can help. Set a timer to remind you to get up and move. You may also consider investing in office furniture that is designed for this very problem. Adjustable-height desks allow you to comfortably use your work station from the seated or standing position. Ball chairs promote active sitting. If you are really daring, try a treadmill desk. Instead of meeting a colleague for coffee, suggest a walking meeting. The bottom line: we need to be mindful of how much time we spend sitting and make a conscious effort to get out of our chairs as often as possible.

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What are some of your favorite health tips?

[Click here](#) to suggest health tips for future issues.



City Spotlight: Association of Corporate Counsel's Georgia Chapter



Jennifer Cooper
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In February of this year, I had a day like any other day that we all know well. Up at 5:30 to run, back to the house to dress and pack for a business trip, make breakfast and get my junior high school daughter off to school. A busy morning at Baker Donelson, then off to the airport. I arrived in Houston that afternoon, looking every bit as tired as I felt. I had to be at Baker Donelson's Houston office in an hour for their open house, then off to take several clients out for a late dinner. But luckily, I had made it through the day without dropping any plates, as my friend Christy Crider likes to say.

As soon as I arrived in my hotel room, my phone rang. It was my friend Elizabeth Robertson of Crawford and Company. Elizabeth is the chief of litigation for Crawford and an officer of the Association of Corporate Counsel's (ACC) Georgia Chapter. Elizabeth explained that the ACC Georgia Chapter was launching a women's initiative, a project near and dear to the heart of the new chapter president, Wanda Morris of Home Depot. Would Baker Donelson be interested in being a founding sponsor of the initiative? I did not hesitate – of course we would! What an honor and an incredible opportunity – to be on the ground floor of developing a women's initiative. I was excited to meet some great women and get to know others better.

My experience with women's initiatives has been limited to the great program we have at Baker Donelson. I quickly learned that the challenges and issues for a women's initiative in an organization like ACC are in some ways very similar, but in some very important ways, the context is different. Two key differences are dealing with "The Department of No" mentality in corporations and the wide-ranging differences in the work environments of its members.

The Department of No. We all know that legal departments are often viewed by their internal clients as the "Department of No." Corporate executives often do not like dealing with the constraints imposed by their legal departments. Unlike outside lawyers, who are usually sought out by companies who welcome their input (or at least acknowledge that it is necessary), company executives are required to get the legal department's "blessing" on a company initiative or program.



City Spotlight, *continued*

Or have to go to them, hat in hand, when something goes awry. An in-house lawyer's trajectory up the corporate ladder requires that he or she gain the confidence of the executives, and find a way to protect the company's legal interests without appearing to be a naysayer.

Since joining the steering committee of the ACC Georgia Chapter's Women's Initiative, I have thought a lot about how it must be especially challenging for women in those departments. Over the last several years, many legal departments have undergone what I like to call a gender transformation. When I began practicing more than 25 years ago, a woman general counsel was unheard of – and women in legal departments were a rarity.

Today, there are 110 women general counsels in the Fortune 500.

Through my own experience, I have observed that increasingly the in-house lawyers I know or work with are women. However, most of the "c-suites" in those companies continue to be dominated by men. So one of the unique challenges women in-house attorneys face is working against the "Department of No" perception and garnering the support and confidence of male executives who may not be entirely comfortable with being told "no" by a female lawyer. It is the classic situation many of us face every day – being firm and committed to what you know is in the best interest of your client (the company), while deftly managing negative gender stereotypes and convincing male colleagues in the c-suite that you are all on the same team. The good news is that there is strength in numbers.

And the more the "gender transformation" evolves, the more support women in-house lawyers will have from each other.

So Many Companies, So Many Workplaces.

My frame of reference is one workplace in one industry. A law firm in the legal business. When it comes to the workplace issues we confront at Baker Donelson, there is a commonality of experience, because we all work for the same organization. The membership of the Georgia Chapter of the ACC (which is predominantly Atlanta in-house lawyers) is made up of lawyers from a wide variety of legal departments – from enormous, global in-house departments, to start-ups where the in-house lawyer is basically a "solo." Also, there is no one industry that dominates the Atlanta business community, so there are members from every industry and business sector – manufacturing, retail, logistics, IT, finance, consumer products, agriculture, oil and gas, transportation, insurance, education, health care, communications – the list is endless. As Wanda Morris, ACC Georgia Chapter President, has described it: "ACC Georgia is fortunate to have an array of female members who bring different legal specialties, in-house roles and professional

tenure to our chapter. The challenge for us through our Women's Initiative has been how to address the needs of our female members across such a varied landscape."



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Strive

Issue 3, 2014



City Spotlight, *continued*

The first three programs offered by the ACC were:



- 1** an open forum/discussion of small groups of women, facilitated by the members of the steering committee;
- 2** a panel discussion on what it takes to become a general counsel; and
- 3** a mentoring workshop followed by a luncheon and spa treatments at a luxury hotel.



The open forum event was designed to learn from the membership what issues they wanted the ACC Women's Initiative to address. Very quickly, it became clear that how to advance up the corporate ladder to general counsel and mentoring were critical to the membership. Not much different than for those working at a law firm – how to make partner and how to find a good mentor. Which explains why we chose the topics for the two subsequent programs!

The panelists for the discussion with general counsels were from different industries and ran the gamut from the general counsel of a large global company in the insurance sector, to a woman who is essentially her own legal department in the oil and gas industry. I had the honor of acting as the moderator of the panel. It was a fun, lively and

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informative discussion and extremely well received by the attendees. The mentoring workshop was excellent. This is where I believe the variety of workplaces and business sectors is truly an asset to the membership, because it was less focused on specific career strategies and help, but on what to look for in a person as a mentor or sponsor.

The experience of working with a women's initiative in an entirely different setting than what I have experienced thus far in my career has been quite a learning experience. I feel that I am more in tune with the day-to-day issues my women clients contend with, and it has given me a new perspective on our own women's initiative at Baker Donelson. It has made me very proud of the work we do as a law firm to support our women. But I am especially proud of how well we support each other – something I have become keenly aware of as I learn more about the day-to-day experiences of women in a wide variety of corporate legal departments.

In November, we will wrap up the year with an overnight retreat to plan for next year, and a cocktail and dinner reception for the sponsors of the ACC Women's Initiative.

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[Click here](#) for more information about the Georgia Chapter of the ACC's Women's Initiative.



Strive

Issue 3, 2014

BAKER DONELSON
Women's Initiative

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Women's Initiative In The News



[Ellen Tauscher](#) discusses [Alliance for Bangladesh Safety's](#) first annual progress report.



[New Orleans CityBusiness](#) Q&A with [Nancy Degan](#).



[Alisa Chestler](#) provides insight on HIPAA violations in [Health Care Risk Management](#).



[Lisa Borden](#) highlighted in [Birmingham Magazine's](#) "20 Women Who Make A Difference."



[Gina Greenwood](#) comments on data breach issues in [Atlanta Business Chronicle](#).

Connect with the Women's Initiative on Social Media



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Baker Donelson to Participate in OnRamp Fellowship:

Innovative "Returnship" Program for Women Re-Entering the Legal Profession

Baker Donelson is excited to be among a select group of leading national law firms to participate in the OnRamp Fellowship, an innovative program to provide women lawyers re-entering the legal profession with an opportunity to update their skills and legal contacts through one-year, paid positions with top law firms. The program aims to replenish the talent pipeline in law firms with diverse, high-performing lawyers who have the potential and the desire to advance into leadership roles.

"Ensuring the retention and advancement of women attorneys continues to be a challenge for the legal profession," said Christy Crider, chair of Baker Donelson's Women's Initiative. "The OnRamp Fellowship program addresses that challenge by offering experienced female attorneys, many of

whom have taken a break from their careers in order to focus on their families, the opportunity to return to the legal profession and expand their experience and skills. It also gives our Firm the opportunity to benefit from an untapped pool of tremendous lawyer talent. I'm grateful to Tonya Grindon and Lori Metrock, co-chairs of the Retention Committee of our Women's Initiative, for their leadership in spearheading our participation in this valuable program."

Baker Donelson is one of only 15 law firms across the country selected to participate in this innovative talent program.

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OnRamp Fellowship, *continued*

The Firm will have five open OnRamp Fellowship positions across four of its offices: Atlanta, Birmingham, Nashville and New Orleans. Women lawyers who are selected to participate in the Fellowship will be provided with a partner advisor at the Firm, an external career counselor, unlimited online continuing legal education and a variety of training from experts in negotiations, oral advocacy, social media, technology, project management and business development.

"Baker Donelson is deeply committed to addressing the issues that can create obstacles to a successful legal career for women," said the Firm's Chairman and CEO Ben C. Adams. "We're very proud to participate in this incredible program that aims to increase gender diversity in our profession."

"This is proof that law firms can be innovative," said Caren Ulrich Stacy, founder of the OnRamp Fellowship. "By participating in the first 'Returnship' ever launched in the legal field, these 15 law firms are pioneers – they are benefitting the profession as well as their own firms by forging a new pathway back for women lawyers who took a break and want to return."

The Baker Donelson Women's Initiative newsletter

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We want your feedback!

Let us know what you think and share tips and tricks with us [here](#).

About the Fellowship

Created in January 2014 by lawyer recruitment, development and diversity veteran Caren Ulrich Stacy, the OnRamp Fellowship is a re-entry platform that matches experienced women lawyers returning to the profession with law firms for one-year, paid positions. This unique experiential learning program gives returning women lawyers – many of whom have opted out of the legal field for a period of time to raise children – an opportunity to demonstrate their value in the marketplace while also broadening their experience, skills and legal contacts.

Law firms that participate in the Fellowship gain access to an untapped group of experienced, diverse lawyers who want to return to the profession but face unique challenges due to the law firms' lockstep structure.

www.OnRampFellowship.com

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