

Cozen O'Connor's Female Shareholders Offer Advice for International Women's Day

Friday, March 8, 2024

2023 was a historical year for Cozen O'Connor – with no fewer than six of the seven members elevated to shareholder being women. In honor of International Women's Day, the Cozen O'Connor Women's Initiative hosted a panel discussion with Wendy Enerson (Global Insurance, Chicago), Susan Grueneberg (Intellectual Property, Los Angeles), Melissa Grossman (Private Client Services, Philadelphia), Suzanne Radcliff (Subrogation, Dallas) and Cheryl Upham (Tax, Philadelphia) to discuss their unique backgrounds and paths to shareholder.

The conversation was moderated by Alycen Moss (Global Insurance, Atlanta), who began by asking each woman to talk about their career path, saying, "One of my favorite things about Cozen O'Connor is that they help you find your *own* path."

Focusing on spending time with her children while they were smaller, Melissa Grossman shared that the path to shareholder doesn't have to look the same for everyone. "I've been part-time for a large portion of my career, and it took longer than 29-year-old me would have thought. So it's definitely possible." She added, "They say, 'You can have everything, you just can't have it all right now.' [...] I've made compromises and sacrifices to be able to feel that I am able to do a good job at whatever I am prioritizing and focusing on at that time."

"I was a little bit afraid to put myself up for shareholder for a long time," Suzanne Radcliff shared. Feeling that it was more important to have the balance when her children were young, she proposed an arrangement that would enable her to be of counsel but not have to travel every week. "I really had the support of the firm to do that all along," she said. But once her children were older, she decided to take that next step and shared how glad she was that she did. "I think it set a good example for my daughter about striving for things that are important to you."

Wendy Enerson has a background in social work and originally thought she would end up in-house or in a government advocacy role. "When I made the move to Cozen O'Connor, I was incredibly impressed by the female leadership at the firm." Though she did not immediately have her sights set on becoming a shareholder, she was struck by how much her colleagues valued her role as a mentor for junior lawyers. "I'm incredibly proud of this firm for recognizing all the talent and value that women lawyers add," she said, sharing that she was able to highlight her mentorship efforts in her shareholder memo.

The panelists went on to discuss the importance of establishing strong relationships, developing a niche area of expertise, seeking out mentors across the firm well before the shareholder process begins, and being patient with the process.

"Branch yourself out and take advantage of all the wonderful people and attorneys who work here and let them help you grow," said Cheryl Upham, who thanked several mentors who advocated for her throughout the shareholder process. Being the only woman in her department for many years, she found both male and female mentors across the firm. "Everybody here wants to help you grow and get to where you want to be in your career," she said.

Susan Grueneberg recommended stepping outside your comfort zone and going for leadership roles internally or in outside legal organizations as a way to develop your own book of business. "It's a good

way to get your name out there and multiply your relationships with people, and the leadership positions actually cement that," she shared.

When asked for their last words of advice: "Stay true to yourself and your plan, and you'll get there," said Cheryl, "you will."

"Over my career, I've heard people often say 'the Cozen O'Connor family,'" added Suzanne, "and I know a lot of lawyers; I don't know anybody else that refers to their firm as a family. I would say lean on that, take ownership and pride in your firm, and invest yourself in this place. If you do, you will have so many doors open to you."

You can learn more about the goals and resources of the Cozen O'Connor Women's Initiative here. The Initiative is led by Co-Chairs Calli Padilla and Kristi Zentner.