

## Female Powerbrokers Q&A: Robins Kaplan's Hollis Salzman

*Law360, New York (February 27, 2014, 2:47 PM ET)* -- Hollis Salzman is a partner in Robins Kaplan Miller & Ciresi LLP's New York office, where she co-chairs the firm's antitrust and trade regulation group. She has particular experience in prosecuting antitrust violations involving international cartels. She currently serves as court-appointed co-lead counsel in *In re Automotive Parts Antitrust Litigation* and in *In re Air Cargo Shipping Services Antitrust Litigation*.



Hollis Salzman

She is an appointed vice chair of the American Bar Association Antitrust Law Section's Civil Redress Committee, executive committee member of the advisory board of the American Antitrust Institute, and executive committee member of the New York State Bar Association's Section of Antitrust Law Committee. She has also provided testimony before the Subcommittee on Antitrust, Competition Policy and Consumer Rights for the United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary. Salzman also provides pro bono representation to indigent and working-poor women in matrimonial and family law matters.

### **Q: How did you break into what many consider to be an old boys' network?**

A: When it comes to antitrust litigation, I frequently find myself the only woman in a sea of male lawyers. Fortunately, this dynamic has been tremendously helpful in my career because it allows me to stand out among my co-counsel and adversaries and adds diversity to the decision-making and leadership in my cases. History has proven that leadership from a single perspective culminates in failure. Diversity is the key to understanding and tackling legal and management issues from all perspectives. I try to ignore discrimination and give it the lack of respect it deserves.

I also owe a great debt to the remarkable women who came before me.

### **Q: What are the challenges of being a woman at a senior level within a law firm?**

A: The challenge of being a woman at a senior level within a law firm is that you are sometimes the sole voice advocating for other women in the firm. Fortunately, the inclusion of diverse backgrounds and perspectives is an integral part of my current firm's culture. The firm was founded 75 years ago by two Jewish lawyers who were excluded from other law firms because of pervasive anti-Semitism at the time. As a result, diversity and inclusion were a part of the firm's core values at its inception and continue to pervade its culture today.

**Q: Describe a time you encountered sexism in your career and tell us how you handled it.**

A: I am more cognizant of sexism today than I was earlier in my career, when I was more often the brunt of it. When I was a younger lawyer, I was frequently asked if I was the court reporter or some other nonlawyer position. I was even once called “sweetie” by a judge while arguing a motion, followed by some other inappropriate comments, which provoked a smirk by my adversary. Being a new lawyer, I put my head down, refused to acknowledge the sexist undertones of these comments, and I won my motion.

However, now that I am the senior lawyer on my cases, I am usually the first to curtail any sexist comments, explicit or otherwise, by my male co-counsel or adversaries. As a practice group leader, I view it as my responsibility to shield junior-level women from the same sexist encounters I experienced earlier in my career. And while I have had to have some frank conversations with senior-male lawyers about the impact of their comments on young women in the room, I find it reassuring that they are generally receptive to the constructive feedback and willing to adjust their behavior to reflect modern standards.

**Q: What advice would you give to an aspiring female attorney?**

A: I strongly advise any young lawyer — male or female — to get as much hands-on experience as early in his or her career as possible. This sets them apart from their peers who are likely only researching and writing memos for their partners. There are many excellent training programs to learn trial and deposition skills which some firms, like my own, provide for all associates moving up in the ranks. If a young lawyer can’t get that experience at his or her law firm, they should consider pro bono opportunities. Pro bono cases not only allow lawyers to give back to their community, but they also provide opportunities to gain tremendous litigation skills.

Most importantly, I advise young lawyers to be themselves. You will never advance by pretending to be someone you are not. Don’t worry about having it all. No person — male or female — can have it all, despite optics that at times appear otherwise. Just focus on your natural strengths and being the best lawyer you can be.

**Q: What advice would you give to a law firm looking to increase the number of women in its partner ranks?**

A: A law firm looking to increase the number of women in its partnership ranks should take interest in stellar female associates who work hard, have a good business sense and demonstrate leadership qualities. These associates — like their male counterparts — should be nurtured and groomed by both male and female partners as future leaders of the firm.

Women’s initiatives are also important to facilitate appropriate networking and training for women lawyers. However, such programs in isolation are not enough. I also think that more training should be offered to women to help them develop business in their own styles. There is no “one size fits all” to business development, so helping women identify their own innate strengths and teaching them how to use these strengths to develop business will go a long way to ensuring they have a seat at the table in future law firm management meetings.

**Q: Outside your firm, name an attorney you admire and tell us why.**

A: I greatly admire the Honorable Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Her name speaks for itself, and I have more reasons why I admire her than I am permitted by word count to state here. Most importantly, she was the second woman in the history of the United States to be appointed to the United States Supreme Court and was instrumental in launching the Women's Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union. She overcame gender discrimination at a time when such behavior was not discussed but rather swept under the carpet by all.

Justice Ginsburg was a pioneer on behalf of working mothers, establishing in history that women can succeed to the highest ranks in the legal field while raising a family. She is a true leader and clearly paved the way for women in the legal community. Because of women like Justice Ginsburg, my 10-year old daughter believes there are no professions that are now out of reach.

*The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the firm, its clients, or Portfolio Media Inc., or any of its or their respective affiliates. This article is for general information purposes and is not intended to be and should not be taken as legal advice.*

All Content © 2003-2014, Portfolio Media, Inc.