

How I Made Partner: 'Communicate Your Career Goals to Others,' Says Genevieve G. Weiner of Sidley Austin

By ALM Staff

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Genevieve G. Weiner, 41, Sidley Austin, Los Angeles

Job title: Partner

Practice area: Restructuring

Law school and year of graduation: Pepperdine, 2007

How long have you been at the firm? I have been with Sidley since September 2019, so just about 3.5 years. I was promoted to partner effective January 2023.

What was your criteria in selecting your current firm? The impetus for my move was my mentor leaving my then-current firm (Gibson Dunn) to join Sidley. While continuing to work with my mentor was certainly a key benefit of the move, I also thoroughly vetted Sidley on my own. I wanted a collegial, diverse, and collaborative culture, plus top-notch work and a firm that wanted to grow its restructuring practice. I was also looking for a firm with a meaningful presence in Los Angeles that did national, company-side work. Sidley delivered on all accounts.

Were you an associate at another firm before joining your present firm? If so, which one and how long were you there? Yes, I was an associate

at Gibson Dunn & Crutcher in Los Angeles for approximately 12 years.

What do you think was the deciding point for the firm in making you partner? Was it your performance on a specific case? A personality trait?

Making connections with the right people? I don't think one case or personality trait led to partnership – nor should it in my mind. Consistently good performance is of course a basic requirement, but I also tried to demonstrate I was a team player and contribute positively to the firm's culture, business development and growth.

Who had or has the greatest influence in your career and why? Sam Newman, who I have worked with since I started as a junior associate, has been my mentor, sponsor, and friend. Sam – who is also a partner in Sidley's restructuring group—has always encouraged me to push myself but also provided support. I think both elements have been key to my career.

What advice would you give an associate who wants to make partner? Stick with it. There will



Genevieve Weiner of Sidley Austin.

Courtesy photo

be road bumps (or detours) in any career, and you have to take the long view. I would also encourage associates to be curious—ask questions and find a good sounding board for ideas.

When it comes to career planning and navigating inside a law firm, in your opinion, what's the most common mistake you see other attorneys making? Not being an effective communicator. It is important to communicate your career goals to others and to keep an open dialogue about your wants and needs—if you don't ask, you won't get! Also, there are a lot of resources available at large law firms—specialized practice areas, business development, practice support, etc.—and you shouldn't be afraid to utilize them.

What challenges, if any, did you face or had to overcome in your career path and what was the lesson learned? How did it affect or influence your career? I had kids as a mid-level associate and wanted to be part time for a number of years. While that decision ultimately lengthened my path to partnership, I don't regret it for a minute (and think being a mom makes me a better lawyer). The bottom line is that there is no one-size-fits-all and you need to do what feels right to you and your family.

Knowing what you know now about your career path, what advice would you give to your younger self? Relax! By nature (and nurture—thanks law school), lawyers worry too much, and I am certainly no exception. If I could, I'd go back and tell my younger self, "You got this."

Do you utilize technology to benefit the firm/practice and/or business development? I don't

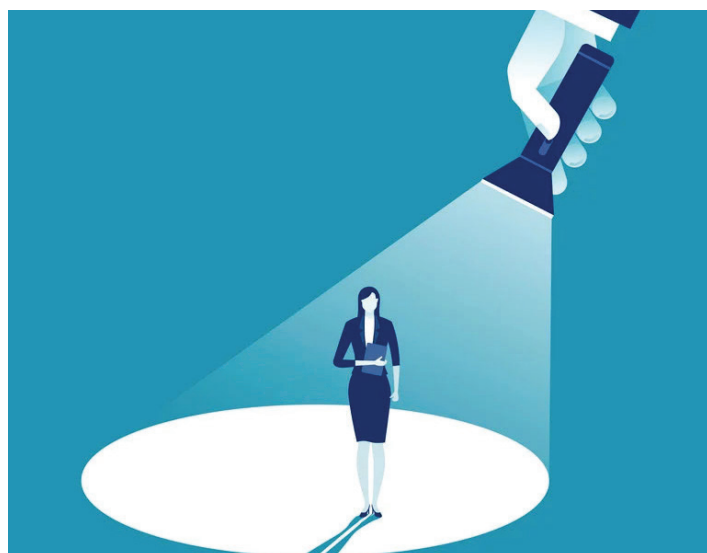


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purport to be the most tech-minded individual, but you can't ignore the increasingly important role tech plays in the practice of law. Given the enormous volume of information available, as well as the fast-moving pace of communication, being fluent with technology is key. I am curious to see what tools come next, including of course, generative AI.

How would you describe your work mindset? Perseverance. While there are some tough days, I love what I do and really enjoy the people with whom I work—if you keep those points as guideposts, you can get through the rough patches.

If you participate in firm or industry initiatives, please mention the initiatives you are working on as well as the impact you hope to achieve. I recently joined Sidley's women's committee and am active in IWIRC (a leading professional women's group in the restructuring space). It is important to me to increase the ranks of women partners, particularly in the restructuring space which still tends to be male dominated.