

FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS

BY DEBORAH WEINSTEIN





hen I was starting out in my career, I was fortunate to have the friendship and advice of successful professional women role models, of whom there were not

many at the time. Legendary author and ethicist Lily Edelman encouraged me to think broadly about my work: “Whatever you learn and do is with you forever and you will use those skills over and over again,” she advised, “so don’t limit yourself, especially early on in your career. Learn everything you can about as much as you can.” As I progressed in my career, I realized how great Lily’s advice really was.

Lily was ahead of her time with her sagacious advice. Current generations starting off in the workforce approach their careers in just the way she recommended. They are continually looking to learn, develop new skills and broaden their scope, many without regard to adopting particular labels to attach to their professional identities. Instead of saying they are lawyers, accountants or teachers, the new generation is likely to identify simply as people with skills to offer in a broad range of work settings.

Work is dramatically different today than it was even a few years ago. Workers across the board want better work/life balance and seek out work situations that best fit their lifestyles. The workforce is becoming more and more mobile with people more likely to change jobs, careers and communities with increased frequency. No longer do people have the same sense of loyalty or view their careers as being confined to a single employer. Employee loyalty is now more about being engaged intensely for a shorter time than about working for the same employer for an entire work life. “Talent development” departments find they must continuously recruit new workers and train their current ones to keep the organization moving forward. “Succession planning” has become an ongoing process that offers a solution to the problems of employee turnover and decreased firm loyalty.

This shift in paradigm becomes more complicated for the legal profession as attrition rates for attorneys, especially women attorneys, remain tremendously high. While generally women outnumber men in law school classes, and law firms and legal departments have hired female associate attorneys in large numbers, the acceptance of women into the ranks of partner, equity partner and firm management has increased at a snail’s pace. For some women, traditional law practice is a bad fit because of the lack of work flexibility or the need to focus on business development. Others seek a more

desirable balance between work and personal life or want to spend time raising a family. Many continue to practice law but in smaller firms, for public interest agencies, or in government service. Some leave traditional practice altogether to begin a new chapter of their careers in a new industry.

And other industries welcome these individuals, who are highly valued for the skills they offer — outside the confines of any particular professional label. Increasingly, corporations, organizations, institutions and government agencies need people with diverse experience and the ability to cross the boundaries of traditional professions and jobs.

Philadelphia lawyers are showing that they can use the experience, skills and dedication that they gained from the law to succeed beyond the scope of traditional practice. I spoke with four dynamic women attorneys who have moved into nontraditional careers about

what they took away from the law as they continue to excel in our community. Listening to our interviewees, one gets the distinct impression that they haven’t rejected the practice of law so much as they have a broader view of their professional lives and the contributions they would like to make. In pursuing their goals, they have built on the firm foundation of their legal training and experience.

Law firms must continue their commitment to creating cultures and organizational structures to best accommodate what attorneys seek today as desirable work environments, which are increasingly characterized as places where all attorneys will achieve success and move into the partnership and management of the firm in increasing numbers. But as working professionals, we also should acknowledge the fact that the world of work has changed and our legal institutions must reconcile the reality of a more mobile legal workforce — not only mobile practitioners, but mobile among professions.

If my mentor’s advice was correct — that everything you learn and do is with you forever and provides the foundation for what you can and will do in the future, and my experience certainly bears that out — we attorneys should feel pretty good about having collectively been involved in helping these women and many other attorneys build the foundation for their success and their contributions, not only to our profession but also to the city of Philadelphia and beyond.

Meet these women attorneys, who have gone on to be leaders in all facets of our communities. And remember, our profession gave them their start. Bask in their success. ■

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“WOMEN LAWYERS CAN ASCEND TO LEADERSHIP IN OTHER AREAS, AND ALL THE BETTER FOR ALL OF US BECAUSE WE’RE USING ALL THE SKILLS AND ALL THE EDUCATION THAT WE HAVE BEHIND US TO BUILD NEW BRIDGES AND TO PAVE NEW ROADS.”

— JENNIFER ROSATO



negotiating, working with others, completing a merger, overseeing employees, personnel, et cetera. Here at the Anti-Defamation League, much of what we do involves relationships with others. Whether it's other non-profit groups or individuals from different races and religious backgrounds, we are bridging differences between people. In addition, obviously managing or overseeing the day-to-day operations of this office, having the experiences I had managing a law firm would come in handy here. Lastly, there are often First Amendment issues that the Anti-Defamation League seeks to weigh in on and address. My background as an attorney enables me to be able to read the legal briefs, to make comments and have an understanding that someone who did not have a legal background would not be able to do.

If you're working a flexible, reduced schedule, you have three children and you're a partner in a law firm or managing a law firm, you have to be able to juggle and manage stress, so I think that in a way that helped prepare me for this role, which requires constant juggling of issues, people, priorities and crises.

Oftentimes when one starts in a career, things are very black and white. You don't see a lot of gray in things. Things are either absolutely right or absolutely wrong. And through time and through the practice of law, through being a parent, through being a child with parents growing older, you begin to see that there's really a lot of gray out there. And I think that this then helps you in your dealings with people and situations going forward.

DID YOU HAVE ANY ROLE MODELS TO FOLLOW IN BREAKING FROM TRADITIONAL PRACTICE? When I asked to work on a reduced schedule at Blank Rome in 1982, as far as I knew there was only one other female attorney in Philadelphia at the time who was permitted to work on a three-day schedule. She was practicing law at Wolf Block. Her name is Debbie Gruenstein and she now has her own firm. And Hope Comisky had just had a child and was going to work a four-day schedule at Dilworth.

A mentor? David Pudlin. He was the attorney at Hanglely Connolly who called me and said the firm would be amenable to someone working on less than a full-time schedule and would also be amenable to making that person a partner. And as it turns out, David Pudlin, as a former chair of the Anti-Defamation League, was the individual who let me know that this opportunity was available.

I always felt, whether it was at Blank Rome, Connolly Epstein or at Hanglely Connolly, and this may be Pollyanna-ish, I was always treated fairly and appropriately. There were not necessarily many women that I knew of that I could use as a mentor, but I had no problem working with the men. In those days, when you went to a real estate closing, you would sit in a room with twenty people and you would be the only woman. In reality, I didn't face hurdles that I knew of, as a woman. I received the same promotions, I received the same monetary compensation, and I never felt out of place to where I should be.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT THIS JOB? For me, having come from the corporate business world, the fact that I have the ability in a nonprofit context to "do good every day" and still maintain relations with people in the general business community, as well as the Jewish community, makes this, for me, a perfect opportunity. It is true that every day I wake up and I know that there will be an interesting project, event, challenge, crisis or person needing assistance facing me in the office and, hopefully, at the end of the day I can say that we at ADL helped make a difference.

NANCY BARON BAER

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

BACKGROUND IN PRACTICE: I was a commercial real estate associate at Blank Rome for over six years. Then, I received a phone call from a friend at the law firm of Hanglely, Connolly, Epstein, Chicco, Foxman & Ewing. I had been working on a reduced schedule basis at Blank Rome since the birth of my oldest daughter and was pregnant with my second child at the time of the phone call. I went over, had an interview and received a job offer — nine months pregnant, which in 1985 was probably semi-unusual — and worked there also on a reduced schedule basis. I became a partner at Hanglely Connolly. While I was there, I had a third child, who is now graduating high school, and I continued on a reduced schedule at the firm. My oldest child is turning 25, so I have been working on a reduced schedule for 25 years. I was elected to the executive committee at Hanglely Connolly and served in that capacity for a number of years until the firm split. I remained with the Connolly Epstein group and became the managing partner of the firm, with a flexible, reduced schedule. I remained managing partner until and through the firm's merger with Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott. I then remained managing partner from the time of the merger for two years until I left to come to the ADL.

TRANSITIONING OUT OF PRACTICE: When I started the practice of law, I always thought that at some point I would do something other than practice in a law firm. I was an urban studies major, which may be what took me into practicing real estate law. But I was always interested in how people relate within their atmosphere and I was always active in a number of nonprofit boards as a layperson. I realized that after the successful merger of the two law firms, this would present a new opportunity. I was ready for a new opportunity.

HOW DID YOUR WORK AS AN ATTORNEY PREPARE YOU FOR THIS NEW CAREER? I think that my legal education is extremely valuable in a number of ways. As law students and lawyers, we're taught to think in an objective manner. We review material and information in a way that may be different than others, and I think we process and use it in a different fashion. Negotiating commercial transactions and managing a law firm certainly necessitated using certain people skills —

NAN FEYLER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

NATIONALITIES SERVICE CENTER

BACKGROUND IN PRACTICE: Like a lot of women of my generation, I went to law school to gain the credibility and access an attorney has, and to better understand the system that controls so much of our lives. I graduated from law school swearing I would never practice law, so that was my starting point.

My first job out of law school was to help start the law school at City University of New York, the public interest law school in New York. I went there during the school's second year to be the Director of Career Planning. And then from there, I decided that after all, I did want to practice law and be sort of on the front lines, so I became a public defender. I basically went from one extreme to the other.

TRANSITIONING OUT OF PRACTICE: I was a public defender and then I left to become the executive director of the AIDS Law Project where, even though I was running the agency, I also had a caseload. While I was at the AIDS Law Project, I also taught at Penn Law School for several years as an adjunct teaching AIDS and the Law. I loved teaching, actually.

After I finished at the AIDS Law Project, I went back to school and got my Masters in Public Health, and that was a really great complement to law school. Then I consulted with the city and the state on public benefits access and worked with the city health centers on increasing Medicaid enrollment and language access programs. I did that while I was going to get my MPH and then for another year or so. But I did not like working alone, by myself, and not having the same amount of influence.

The thing that I have come to appreciate about the diversity of my background is that I actually have experience or knowledge of a broad range of civil and criminal legal practice — criminal defense law, public benefits, discrimination law, and really a pretty good understanding of the basics of immigration law, though not how to do it. It's incredibly valuable as a public interest lawyer to understand the criminal justice system as well as the civil rights and public benefits systems. So I've really enjoyed the fact that I've had these opportunities.

I define myself as an advocate, and I think I bring an advocacy perspective to everything I do. The challenge of being an executive director is for me to feel like I am advocating and helping individuals as well as working for systemic change, which is kind of my vision. And I think I'm able to accomplish that — I really enjoy my work.

HOW DID YOUR WORK AS AN ATTORNEY PREPARE YOU FOR THIS NEW CAREER? It's amazing — saying you're a lawyer opens doors. It's something I take very seriously in terms of making a difference in people's lives, and it was absolutely the right thing for me. I use my legal degree, my knowledge, my perspective, and I couldn't be where I've been or where I am without it.

My philosophy is you learn from the individuals that you serve and then you look at patterns and move forward for more systemic change and broader change, et cetera. So my law degree was really instrumental not only in giving me confidence, but also in how I approach management of a non-profit organization and social change.

It took me a while to figure out how to be an attorney and find it consistent with my values. I am now proud to be an attorney, and I have really figured out that for me by managing agencies and bringing them forward, and my legislative advocacy and policy

work, I have defined myself as an attorney in a way that is consistent with my values and who I am.

DID YOU HAVE ANY ROLE MODELS TO FOLLOW IN BREAKING FROM TRADITIONAL PRACTICE? There was no one single mentor or role model but I've had lots of support along the way. Before I went to law school I was a career counselor so I did a lot of thinking and the model I used was about starting from strengths. I learned and thought a lot about what it means to be a lawyer because I was helping folks to make their careers work for them and that's a very different perspective. I think I was able to figure that out for myself on my own.

There was a judge, Maggie Kammer, who I thought was really great. She was a legal services lawyer who became a judge, and I knew her as a judge. She was a very exciting woman in terms of taking a more traditional route — but not traditional for women relatively speaking; that was probably the late '80s. She was very ambitious but also her background was all social change, and she was very confident but down-to-earth and funny. I don't know how much I internalized that, but there were many, many men and women whom I've admired.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT THIS JOB? What I've learned about myself is that I love being an advocate. I love working for social change and seeing and making a difference, which this agency does day-in, day-out. What I also love, I've come to realize, is learning new things. And I have, from really my early 20s, made a commitment to do a lot of different things in my life — my professional life. Keep the relationship and the kids the same.

Before I took this job, I knew nothing about immigrants — I haven't traveled, I don't speak any other languages, and it's just been really thrilling to learn so many different things about so many different people. I also really enjoy the creativity of managing an agency and helping to shape its vision.





acting president for one year, a role that wrapped up with the start of incoming Kimmel Center President Anne Ewers' term on July 9.

HOW DID YOUR WORK AS AN ATTORNEY PREPARE YOU FOR THIS NEW CAREER? Being in a position of leadership requires keen judgment, and I think being a lawyer — at least from my background in litigation and employment law — gives you a broad perspective and hones your judgment skills. As an attorney, you develop your analytical skill set, your defense and offense positioning skills to see the other side, and also your judgment. I translate the analytical skills that you learn as an attorney into seeing the macro and the micro. It's almost like playing chess. You have to see the entire board, and anticipate all the moves, and also understand the gravity of each move.

This job is very complex. We have four business lines, including venue management, music and theatrical presentations, development and special events. There are all types of contracts that come up, managing a board and operations and balancing financial issues. It includes working with the public and negotiat-

ing the positioning of the institution within the marketplace. I use the skill set I developed as an attorney all the time.

DID YOU HAVE ANY ROLE MODELS TO FOLLOW IN BREAKING FROM TRADITIONAL PRACTICE? The one woman who inspired me the most was the general counsel of the law department in the Chicago Public Schools. She's a judge now, Judge Marilyn Johnson. She encouraged me to do things in addition to my job, to take on additional projects. And I would say for all young and seasoned lawyers who are thinking about doing something different with their legal degree, if you work in a corporation or if you work in any institution that has business lines, learn the business and learn it from a business manager's perspective. So take on projects that are outside of your typical lawyer projects. I think that that gives you: one, the experience, and two, it allows other people to see you in a different way. It gives you more dimension as a professional. It's important to have that comfort level, but it's also important for people to see you in that role. Because most people, when they see a lawyer, they see a lawyer. They don't necessarily see a businesswoman.

My biggest advice to women who are trying to do something different with their legal career is to understand a subject matter. Attack it from a policy perspective or a business line perspective so you can make that link and that transition.

When you have high achievers who are leaders, they like to be decision makers and they like to contribute at both a high and a deep level. Sometimes, working in other institutions provides these opportunities to satisfy us personally, professionally and emotionally.

I think once a lawyer, always a lawyer. I don't run away from that identity. I embrace it and I would encourage all professionals who are lawyers to embrace that part of their identity. I mean, heck, we sacrificed a lot for those law degrees, right?

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT THIS JOB? I really like being around the creative energy in the arts. I'm working with people who are very passionate. I have some typical lawyer tendencies and skills and approaches, and being in the creative world, everything's not black and white and the lines aren't straight and sometimes there are no lines. What I enjoy most about it is really being a little more creative.

NATALYE PAQUIN

*EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
THE KIMMEL CENTER, INC.*

BACKGROUND IN PRACTICE: I started out as a litigation attorney for three years with a small law firm in Chicago. We did medical malpractice defense, representing the City of Chicago's Cook County Hospital and other physicians. After that, I was a regional attorney with the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights for almost seven years. I was there around the time that the Americans with Disabilities Act became law, so I was one of ten people from the Department of Education who became an expert on the ADA. We trained other lawyers and consulted with universities and school districts on implementing the ADA. That's how I got recruited to the Chicago Public Schools — as the ADA expert. It was a transition, but I handled ADA matters for just a very short time. Soon after I was recruited, I returned to the law department and practiced law for another four years.

TRANSITIONING OUT OF PRACTICE: I was a lawyer on the business side of education, and in addition to my litigation workload, I was also assigned policy initiatives. Those policy initiatives and policy questions got the attention of the chairman of the Board of Education, and he recruited me to come and work in his office as one of his assistants to work on special projects. Two of the special projects were a big purchasing initiative and a complex transportation initiative. I learned the ins and outs as a project person with a legal background. From there, I was appointed chief purchasing officer of the Chicago Public Schools managing \$1 billion in expenditures. Then I served as managing deputy commissioner for the Chicago Department of Transportation.

Since I have all this operations background, I came here as the chief of staff to Paul Vallas with the School District of Philadelphia and also served as the chief operating officer. In my spare time, I sought out opportunities to volunteer, lead and participate in arts and cultural institutions, including the Kimmel Center. Prior to joining the Kimmel Center in an executive capacity, I served as a volunteer on their education committee for two years. In July 2006, I was recruited into this role as executive vice president and chief operating officer. Shortly after taking over the job, I was appointed

JENNIFER ROSATO

SENIOR ASSOCIATE DEAN OF STUDENT AFFAIRS
DREXEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW

BACKGROUND IN PRACTICE: I clerked for Judge O’Neill in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania for two years prior to joining the law firm of Hangley Connolly Epstein Chicco Foxman & Ewing as a commercial litigator. I had been a summer associate at Morgan Lewis and at Schnader. While I was practicing law, I just missed that ability to teach. I felt like Hangley Connolly was a great place for me to be post-clerkship, a great firm to be at, but there was just something missing for me.

TRANSITIONING OUT OF PRACTICE: When I was in law school, I really wanted to be a law professor someday. It was just a matter of timing. So I thought I’ll be practical, I’ll pay my loans off, I’ll build a practice, and then I’ll teach and I’ll write in my specialty area. It was a great plan — except that when I was practicing, I really had the hunger to teach. Right away. And I remember, Steve Foxman said to me, you need to do what you need to do.

I left practice for academia after a year to join the faculty of Villanova Law School on a two-year contract as a legal writing instructor. It was a big risk. Being a legal writing instructor on a temporary basis was not where I wanted to be. I started to write, and I figured, I have a bachelor’s degree in social work from Cornell, so my expertise was child abuse, child protection, children’s rights. Somehow through a twist of fate I had become a commercial litigator, and I loved that, too, but I wanted to go back to my roots and decided to do scholarship and teaching in family law. That’s how I pitched myself going into the academic market, but my big course was civil procedure and that was really right out of my federal clerkship and my experience with Hangley Connolly.

I became a professor of family law at the Brooklyn Law School and stayed there for fifteen years teaching family law. I formed a

health law policy center and eventually moved into administration as associate dean of student affairs while teaching a half load. Because it’s a standalone law school, that really prepared me for doing what I am doing now.

HOW DID YOUR WORK AS AN ATTORNEY PREPARE YOU FOR THIS NEW CAREER? Everything. The analytical skills, analyzing every problem, top to bottom, prioritizing, I started that in law school. Managing people, I started that in law school as a law journal editor in chief. Moot court — I present publicly all the time from television to public speaking to my classroom experience. I argued before Justice O’Connor in law school and Judge Adams and Judge Scirica. It was fabulous training. Then in the firms that I worked at — Schnader, Morgan and Hangley — I learned always do your best work. Everything is a reflection of your credibility. I learned that from the firms, and that sense of professionalism, the culture, because I had not learned that in my childhood. I learned by osmosis. All of that I bring to my role as a professional in an educational setting. I think I’m actually a better academic because I’ve had the practical legal experience. I also have more credibility in the practicing world as an academic because I’ve done it, even for a short time, even a while ago.

I do believe it’s important not to stay someplace that’s not a good fit for you, that you should not force yourself. Really take advantage of resources that are out there. Obviously, you have to think hard about it, but things like the money and the time and all that, that can work itself out if there’s something that you really want to do. And those legal skills will never be wasted because they are so important to whatever you go into. They’re part of who you are as a professional, and you’ll never be shedding those things.

Women lawyers can ascend to leadership in other areas, and all the better for all of us because we’re using all the skills and all the education that we have behind us to build new bridges and to pave new roads.

DID YOU HAVE ANY ROLE MODELS TO FOLLOW IN BREAKING FROM TRADITIONAL PRACTICE? I take mentoring as I go along for what I need for that particular period of growth. It’s complicated for me, not only as a woman, but I’m also a person of color. I come from a Latino background, so everything at college was new for me and new for my family. The practice of law was new — getting used to the culture, getting used to academics — I didn’t know what that was all about. In academia, a number of mentors in my institution helped me along. The chair of my status committee was a wonderful person, Mary Ellen Fullerton, and she helped guide me along the way with everything from when you have this situation in the classroom how do you deal with it, to how you should get your scholarly agenda in place for tenure. Those are things that are not obvious going into it.

Very early on, I was a part of the Latino law professors’ network and I had a couple of very good mentors there, too, who were there for me on the phone, e-mail, and also meeting with them a few times a year to look at my work or to create opportunities for me. That’s what mentors do. They do two things: They look out for you but they also push you forward. Then you have to prove yourself. So I always felt responsibility to them to do a very good job. And they always said, when you’re wonderful at what you do, then that’s all the thanks that I need.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT THIS JOB? I think it’s yet to be seen. I enjoy working with students and seeing what we’ve created together and their satisfaction with it, and our collective investment in it. I love that part of it. And you really see that when you’re in a startup. I think the best part of it, both from being an acting dean as well as being an associate dean, is just working together to build, and really being able to say, “Wow, we did this all together.”

