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ON THE RISE



PARTNER

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Experience:

Vinson & Elkins, 2008-present

Education:

Harvard Law School, 2008

Harvard College, 2005

What drew you to a career in law?

I actually majored in biochemistry in college, and was planning on getting an MD/PhD before going on to biomedical research. But it didn't take long working in a lab for me to realize it wasn't for me. Law school was the answer to "What on earth do I do now?" Law school turned out to be a great answer, though.

Have you set a specific goal that you want to achieve in the next year?

I don't make New Year's resolutions, but I do embrace a theme for each calendar year, which really is a goal of some stripe. This year, as I was returning from maternity leave with my third son in four years, the theme was to stop putting things off "until the boys get older" if at all possible. I realized I kept saying things to myself like "Oh, that would be a fun place to go on vacation when the boys get a little older" or "I really should limit work travel until the boys get a

little older." I wanted to change my attitude a little bit this year from a mindset of deferral to a mindset of problem solving, to try to figure out how to do things I want to do instead of just delaying them some indefinite amount of time.

What has been your proudest career moment and your biggest hurdle?

I am most proud of the work I do when I help a client solve a problem that a lot of other smart people haven't been able to solve. I am probably not the most ruthless negotiator in the world and there are lots of lawyers out there with more experience than me, but I have always been very proud of my ability to solve tricky problems with creative solutions that give everyone at the negotiating table what they need to get a deal done.

The biggest hurdle has always been figuring out how to do the job I love – which involves working on large, complex, important transactions that often involve 'round the clock negotiations and machinations – without sacrificing the people I love. Even with a hugely supportive husband and a great nanny, there is no easy answer, and most days I am not as good at my job or as good at being a wife or mother as I'd like to be. But I try not to beat myself up about it too much.

Where do you fit on a 1-10 work-life balance scale with 10 being nirvana? Please explain.

It completely depends on the day. Some days are 1s and some are 10s. And a lot are in between.

What is the top quality that you've used to succeed in the profession?

I try to have empathy for everyone I interact with (clients, counterparties, colleagues) and think about things from their perspective. While I don't do it as well as I could, I think this habit makes be a better service provider, better partner and better teacher.

Who is your favorite mentor and why?

This is always the toughest question. I have been blessed with so many extraordinary mentors. At V&E, Jeff Floyd

is a very important mentor to me, and has spent a lot of time teaching me about my practice. I like to say you know someone is a good mentor when they give you confidence and comfort when you are feeling humbled after screwing something up but also give you a good dose of humility when you are feeling a bit smarter than you actually are. And that's Jeff.

Outside of V&E, Leo Strine, the Chief Justice of the Delaware Supreme Court, was my M&A professor in law school. We got to know each other then, and he's always gone out of his way to be a resource and mentor as I've progressed through my career since leaving school.

What's the best advice anyone has ever given you?

As I was preparing to go on my first maternity leave, and was very concerned about my pending deals, I was running Jeff Floyd through the minutiae of one particular matter and noting he could always call me when I was out if necessary. He cut me off and said something to the effect of: "Lande, this may be really hard for you to believe, but I have managed to do a few M&A deals without you in my career. Everything will be just fine. You are not as critical as you imagine." Jeff was right. I don't think I did more than an hour or two of work on a three month maternity leave, and I still continually remind myself that sometimes, it is just fine to let someone else handle something if there's somewhere else I need to be.

What trends are you observing in the profession that you're excited about?

I think lawyers are constantly being called on to be more creative and proactive with clients, as opposed to just being scriveners and negotiating the legal terms of a deal within a specific narrow set of parameters. And I think that's great, because it is the part of the practice I like best.

What is the greatest challenge you see for the legal profession?

Attracting and retaining talented people. ■