

Inside Counsel

Learn how to work within your frame of what's important to you.

Every obstacle is an opportunity for an unanticipated success. I was very driven in terms of wanting to accomplish things.

As a female attorney, I think you always encounter obstacles.

There is no shortage of good work to do in the world. The important thing is to do something.

I received a great deal of support along the way.

Selecting the right place to work is key.

It's the easiest thing in the world to be overwrought and angry and nasty. The truly exceptional person under tremendous stress and pressure maintains their cool and their sense of humor.

It's our goal that our female attorneys thrive and prosper and become leaders within the firm.

Believe in yourself and be bold. Be willing to take chances.

As I advanced in my career, I was always looking for opportunities to put people together.

TRANSFORMING LEADERSHIP

HOW SEVEN WOMEN MADE THEIR MARK
ON THE CORPORATE LEGAL PROFESSION.

BY DANIELLE FEINSTEIN, MELISSA MALESKE,
ASHLEY POST, MARY SWANTON AND ALEX VORRO

The path to success is an individual one. No two people take the same route as they make their way through their education and career. But one thing is certain: Much of our achievement—be it personal or professional—is thanks to guidance from important coaches, friends, leaders and bosses we've encountered along the way. This is especially true for women in the legal profession, who continue to face obstacles when it comes to career advancement.

In this story, InsideCounsel profiles several

women of influence in law who have made a difference by working to advance women in the legal industry. Many of the women are true pioneers and trailblazers, having made a name for themselves in a highly competitive, male-dominated field. These women also were honored at the 2011 Transformative Leadership Awards for their perpetual efforts to promote and champion women lawyers.

Read on to learn more about their career paths and the personal mentors who helped them accomplish their goals.

VISIT WWW.INSIDECOUNSEL.COM/TRANSFORMATIVELEADERSHIP FOR EXPANDED COVERAGE OF THESE OUTSTANDING WOMEN IN LAW.

KIM KOOPERSMITH

MANAGING PARTNER, AKIN GUMP STRAUSS HAUER & FELD LLP

Much like her role model Rosa Parks, who lifted an entire group of people on her back through a simple act of civil disobedience, Kim Koopersmith has done her best to blaze a trail for women lawyers.

An attorney's daughter, Koopersmith knew from an early age that not only did she want to follow her father's career path, she wanted to crusade for betterment of humanity by doing public interest work. While the exact nature of her work didn't come to fruition as she had originally planned, having spent most of her career as a commercial litigator, the interest in helping others endured.

One of the ways in which this interest manifested itself is in the work Koopersmith has done to develop business policies that ensure women have equal opportunity to grow and succeed at

her firm. Koopersmith was handpicked for the task of drafting and managing Akin Gump's reduced workload policy intended to ease some of the burdens on women with small children who want to have more time to spend with their families yet still desire to remain productive and on the partnership track. When she returned to full-time status after years of working on a reduced schedule, she was recognized by the firm's chairman for distinguishing herself while working on a high-profile case. Impressed with her perseverance and ability, Koopersmith was lauded as a perfect example of the system working and was given responsibility over the firm's reduced workload scheduling.

"The key is to come up with definitions so that there's some consistency in how people are treated, that they're being treated fairly and that their contributions are being recognized," she says, adding that 65 women have successfully taken advantage of the policy.

I will continue to make sure that people see the value in having women in law firm leadership positions.

Koopersmith also has striven to ensure equality for women by completely overhauling the firm's professional development plan. Specifically, she looked at revising the assignment system in an attempt to promote parity and rid it of any antiquated, gender-biased practices. "You need to take a heavier hand in making sure opportunities get distributed evenly," she says, "and leaving it to chance is not a good step for diversity or gender issues."

Koopersmith takes great pains in the recruiting process to ensure strong women candidates are given a good deal of attention. She also is on the firm's compensation and partner admissions committees working to promote diversity.

"In all of those initiatives," she says, "I make sure there is someone who is always thinking, 'How does this all play out and are people being evaluated fairly?' 'Is compensation being handled fairly?' 'Are the different ways in which people contribute being recognized?' In both of those processes, I definitely have my eye on gender issues."

Ultimately, Koopersmith truly believes it is incumbent upon her as a woman managing partner of a large law firm to set an example for those around her.

"I will continue to make sure that people see the value in having women in law firm leadership positions," she says. "That will benefit everybody."



AGE: 52

LAW SCHOOL: Fordham University School of Law

FIRST JOB AFTER LAW SCHOOL: Anderson Kill

FAVORITE WOMEN IN HISTORY: Rosa Parks and Hillary Clinton

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RYAN SLACK