

A conversation with our women leaders

While gender inequality still remains in leadership positions at law firms and throughout the legal field in general, you wouldn't know it by some of the high-profile female managing partners in Atlanta. We recently sat down for a Q&A session with four women leading the local offices of Baker Donelson; Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton LLP; McKenna Long & Aldridge LLP; and, Morris, Manning & Martin, LLP. While they each took their own route through the glass ceiling and into the corner office, they share similar beliefs regarding the qualities and responsibilities that define the job.

Linda Klein

GEORGIA MANAGING SHAREHOLDER

Baker Donelson



Making a difference has always been important to Linda Klein. Her advocacy on behalf of her clients, her profession and her community has made all the difference in her career success. She became managing partner of Gambrell & Stolz in 2001 and remained in the role leading the firm into a merger with Baker Donelson in 2007. Her leadership extends beyond the firm to the broader community. She was the first woman elected to serve as president of the State Bar of Georgia and has led many community organizations.

WHAT QUALITIES MAKE A LEADER?

The ability and willingness to mentor. Helping colleagues become more skilled and developed in their talents makes them stronger in their jobs and their jobs more personally fulfilling. Setting an example is so important. This means you ask no one to work harder than you.

Leadership is service as much as it is leading. You are serving your constituents. Therefore, it is important to listen. A job is more gratifying if you have an opportunity to speak with the leader and be heard. When your grandmother told you that you have two ears and one mouth, she was of course suggesting that you should listen twice as much as talk. She was right. You will learn a lot from your team that will help you identify their strengths and find the best opportunities for each member. Have respect for everyone.

A leader is also a mediator, knowing when to step in to assure that everyone has an opportunity to reach their full potential. Find a common ground. You are investing in talent. You are wasting it if you do not work hard to ensure that everyone can succeed.

DO YOU THINK LEADERSHIP QUALITIES ARE INNATE OR LEARNED?

Both. The innate are further developed by the examples we observe in family, friends and teachers, but also learned in our experiences from an early age. You can observe children at play and it often becomes obvious who the leaders are in their interaction with the other children. The leaders learn how to negotiate, which is the difference between leaders and bullies.

WHAT WERE SOME DEFINING MOMENTS IN YOUR CAREER?

For my first job, I moved to a city where I knew no one. I was too naïve, perhaps, to know that it wasn't a good idea. Without a base of support, I was forced to network (before that term was popularized) so I could meet new friends. That's how I found the bar association. I made great friends and built a professional network.

At A Glance

Baker Donelson, Bearman,
Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC
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Atlanta, GA 30326
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Admitted to Practice
Georgia, 1983

Practice Areas

Advising Business Owners
Resolving Disputes
Contract Law
Professional Liability Law
Construction Law
Education Law
Pharmaceutical Law

Education

Juris Doctor, Washington & Lee, 1983
Bachelor of Arts, Union College, 1980

Professional Memberships

State Bar of Georgia, First Woman to Serve as President
American Bar Association, Chair of the House of Delegates
ABA, Chair of ABA Day (Congressional Outreach)
ABA, Chair of Tort Trial and Insurance Practice Section
ABA, Council of Section of International Law
ABA, Editorial Board of Law Practice Management Magazine

Community Activities

Board of Directors, Southface Energy Institute
Board of Directors and Secretary, Neighbor to Family
Executive Committee, Buckhead Coalition
Past President, Board of Directors' Network
Past President, Caucus of State Bars
Past Chair, Institute for Continuing Legal Education in Georgia
Lawyers Foundation of Georgia
Advisory Boards, Best Lawyers in America and Super Lawyers.

Professional Awards

2014 Champion of Justice, Georgia Legal Services Program
2013 McGlothlin Fellow, William and Mary's Business and Law Schools
2009 Randolph Throrer Award for Lifetime Achievement, the State Bar of Georgia
2009 Named to the YWCA Academy of Women Achievers
2004 the ABA Margaret Brent Achievement Award