

The Women Influence & Power in Law Awards 2021: Law Firm Thought Leadership

Sigrid McCawley, Managing Partner, Boies Schiller Flexner

What was your route to the top?

Incredibly hard work! I had to outwork my opposing counsel and my male counterparts to gain the confidence of other lawyers around me to get promoted at the firm. It was not always easy. I remember getting up 5 a.m. to go do fertility treatments so I could still fit in a long workday to stay on pace with my male counterparts. I also remember multiple depositions and court appearances where the male lawyer in the room would ask if I was the court reporter. I am going into my 20th year at Boies Schiller Flexner and my hope now is that I can pave a pathway that will make it more manageable for young female lawyers to be successful at big law.

Looking back, what do you wish you had known when you started out in the legal profession?

I wish I had been an earlier advocate for my own work and priorities and recognized that my voice was as important as anyone else in the room. I could have been a more aggressive negotiator—for opportunities and for a seat at the table. Most men have little hesitation about asking for

opportunities—even with little experience at the task at hand. I wish I would have known I should always take a seat at the head of the table closest to the client or the judge, rather than minimizing my voice by deferring to older male lawyers in the room.

What is the best leadership advice you've given or received, and why do you think it was effective?

The best leadership advice I have received was from my dearest friend and law partner Caryl Boies, who lost her battle with cancer in 2010. Caryl taught me to never give up. Even when you think the case is falling apart you have to lead your team like you are winning. You have to dig deep and fight hard to get the right result for your client. There have definitely been moments in my career when a case was not going in the best direction and she taught me to never give up fighting for your client—and of course you can always appeal!



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Courtesy photo