

## Female Powerbrokers Q&A: Arnold & Porter's Veronica Rendon

Law360, New York (December 09, 2013, 3:46 PM ET) -- [Veronica Rendon](#) is a partner in Arnold & Porter LLP's New York office and the co-head of the securities enforcement and litigation practice group. She also serves on the firm's risk committee and lateral hiring committee, and has served on other firm committees and task forces over the years. Her practice is split between complex commercial litigation matters and investigations and enforcement proceedings launched by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and other federal and state agencies. She has helped cultivate Arnold & Porter's New York WomenConnect semiannual programs, which provide a forum for women lawyers and senior-level clients to discuss challenges facing professional women, with a strong focus on practical solutions and advancement.

### **Q: How did you break into what many consider to be an old boys' network?**

A: For me the law has always been a calling. The question was never whether I wanted to pursue a legal career, but how. I never thought of myself as a women practitioner but as a lawyer. The challenge has always been how to best excel at the task at hand. I have a natural confidence and perhaps a naive belief that talent rises to the top, which has been my experience. I have always expected to be judged on the merits and that has been a successful path. While there certainly are challenges to being a woman practitioner, including the competing demands on your time and having to persuade the world of what you already know to be true — that you are good at what you do and serious about your career — dedication, commitment and an unwavering belief that it can be done have helped me to overcome.

### **Q: What are the challenges of being a woman at a senior level within a law firm?**

A: The challenges of being a senior practitioner in a law firm are in many ways gender-neutral. You likely are running a busy and expanding practice, you are being invited into the business side of the firm, and you are being asked to act as a decision-maker on important strategic and policy decisions, all the while working with peers of the highest quality. That's a tall order. When you further factor in home and parenting responsibilities, it can also be a juggling act of the highest order. But, when you love what you do and have folks who support you, it's an exhilarating and wonderful adventure.

### **Q: Describe a time you encountered sexism in your career and tell us how you handled it.**

A: I once had a senior male partner who took a clear dislike to me and was often abrasive. Anything I did to maintain an upbeat and professional relationship only seemed to make things worse. Increasingly concerned, I spoke confidentially with a trusted senior practitioner and friend. He had also witnessed a pattern of behavior that concerned him. Apparently, I reminded the offender of his younger sister, with whom he had a very competitive and complex relationship. My trusted friend rightly pointed out to him that this was not an appropriate basis on which to judge any colleague. The relationship between me and this individual never became warm. It did, however, become neutralized, which allowed me the continued opportunity to build and develop relationships and grow my practice.

**Q: What advice would you give to an aspiring female attorney?**

A: The advice would in many ways be the same for any aspiring attorney. Work hard, be heard and realize your importance on every matter. Take pride in the quality of your work and realize it is your “calling card,” your primary business development tool both inside and outside of the firm. Be open to all opportunities, but choose a course that brings you in contact with people to whom you aspire and work that is fulfilling and enjoyable.

For female practitioners, decide what path feels the most comfortable and then work hard to achieve it. If you stay with a firm full-time and also have a family — which is what I did and were the best decisions of my life — build an infrastructure that allows you maximum flexibility and support. For me, that included finding trusted caregivers and speaking with and taking advice from mentors who supported me. It also included picking a firm like Arnold & Porter, which is “gender blind” and celebrates diversity. Most importantly, follow your heart and your dreams. Life is full of challenges, whatever path you pick, so it is important that you select one that is considerate of your goals and ambitions. It can be done. You just have to decide to do it.

**Q: What advice would you give to a law firm looking to increase the number of women in its partner ranks?**

A: Identify your superstars early, reward them and provide opportunities for growth. Help garner genuine mentorships and start inviting women practitioners into business development opportunities early. Make sure your quality practitioners are getting quality work and meeting appropriate professional milestones to ensure suitable professional development. Recognize the stress of being a mother and a lawyer, and work with your practitioners so that they do not have to face the associated challenges alone, but rather feel like they are part of a team that is helping them to succeed on both fronts. That can include adopting smart firmwide practices designed to offer support, but can also include at the individual level just listening and offering compassionate advice at an opportune moment.

**Q: Outside your firm, name an attorney you admire and tell us why.**

A: There are many attorneys outside my firm that I admire as quality people and outstanding practitioners. Ones that were particularly important in my career are Richard Swanson, the general counsel of York Capital and a former partner, and the Honorable Denise Cote, a United States federal judge on the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York.

As a young associate, Richard took me under his wing and taught me about securities law, practice and business development as well as the rigors and responsibilities inherent in being a partner in a large firm. Richard sponsored me for partnership and, after I became partner, continued to offer insights and advice on how to succeed both inside and outside of the law firm. To this day, Richard is a close friend and trusted advisor.

Judge Cote presided over a large investor class action on which I worked as a senior associate. When she realized I was heavily involved in the matter and had a deep understanding of the facts and law, she began calling on me in court. She ultimately made me liaison counsel for our side of the dispute, and her confidence afforded me the credibility within my firm and client group to become the lead lawyer in arguing significant motions and to take the lead at certain key depositions. I will always be grateful that

she permitted me those opportunities and singled me out in what was otherwise a large group of senior male practitioners. It helped me to develop a voice and confidence that I continue to cultivate to this day.

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