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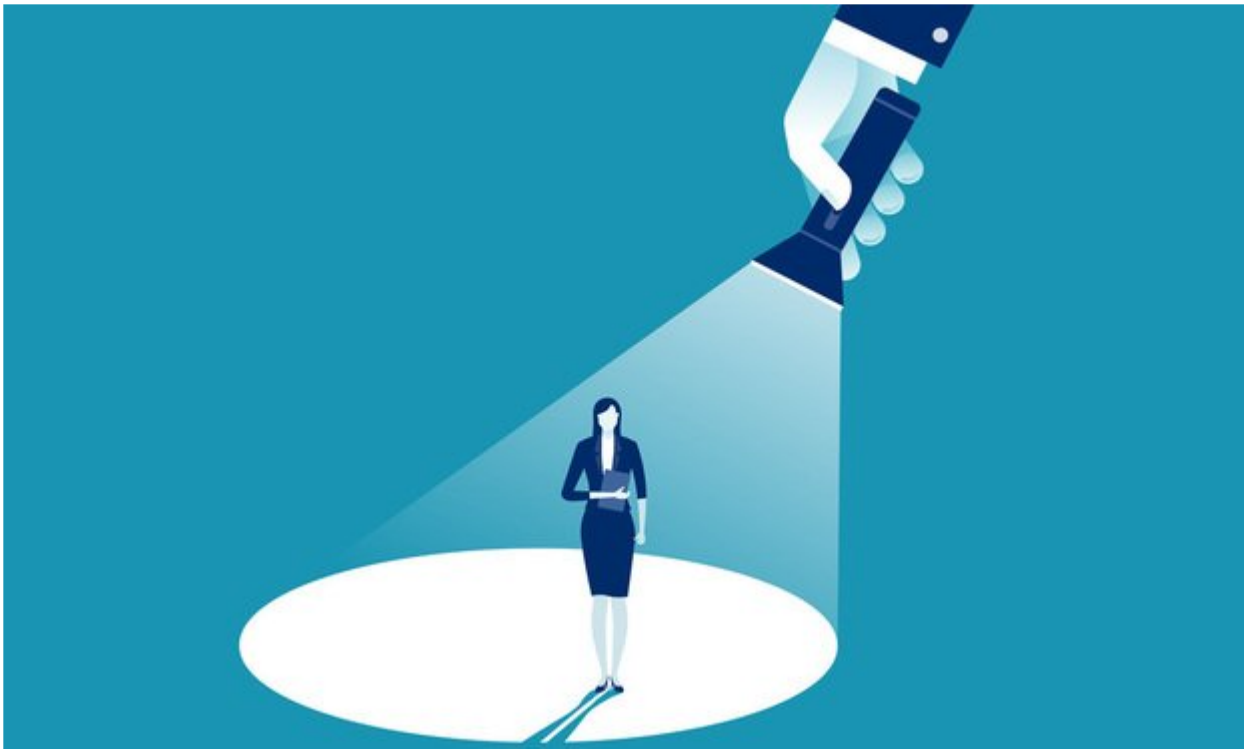
How I Made Firm Managing Principal: 'Seek Opportunities and Accept the Challenges That Come With Them,' Says Samantha Hoffman of Jackson Lewis

"There is a big difference between talking about valuing the voices of all attorneys and demonstrating real commitment to that mindset. My advice would be to find a place where you feel that support and where you feel empowered to go after what you want."

By Tasha Norman | March 01, 2021



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Samantha N. Hoffman (https://www.jacksonlewis.com/people/samantha-n-hoffman), 45, Jackson Lewis

Office: Irvine, California.

Title: Firm Managing Principal.

Practice area: Labor and employment law with an emphasis on class actions and complex litigation, and general employment litigation.

Law school and year of graduation: I earned my J.D. from Loyola Law School Los Angeles in 2000.

How long have you been at the firm? Since 2004 (17 years).

Samantha Hoffman, Courtesy photo

How long were you a partner at the firm before being promoted to firm managing principal? I was elevated to income principal Jan. 1, 2009, and to equity principal Jan. 1, 2010. I took on the firm managing principal role in October 2020 after a little over 10 years as an equity partner.

Were you a partner at another firm before joining your present firm? No, I was never a partner at another firm. I joined Jackson Lewis as an associate in 2004, so essentially grew up here.

What year were you promoted to your current position at your current firm? 2020.

Where there any surprises you faced after becoming firm managing principal? One of the benefits of growing up at Jackson Lewis and knowing Kevin Lauri, our firm chairman, for as long as I have—and having had the opportunity to serve on the firm's board of directors for a few years—is that I had a good sense of what I was getting into!

What's been the biggest change, day-to-day, in your routine since becoming firm managing principal? The biggest change so far from the other leadership roles I've held at the firm is the opportunity to make decisions and suggestions for improvements at a national level instead of regionally or locally. I'm getting a new glimpse into what's required to run a firm on a day-to-day basis, and it's been really exciting.

"One of our sayings here is that leadership is not a role — it's an activity." *Kevin Lauri, chairman, Jackson Lewis*

What do you think was the deciding point for the firm in making you firm managing principal? Response from firm chairman Kevin Lauri: "I'd like to take this one by saying that once we decided we needed a firm managing principal, Samantha was the obvious choice. Her attention to detail and follow-up skills are exemplary; she makes sure that nothing falls through the cracks. She has an intuitive sense of how she can add value to everything she does. One of our sayings here is that leadership is not a role—it's an activity. Throughout Samantha's leadership roles at the firm, whether formal or informal and whether she was building an office, serving on our board or managing one of the firm's largest clients, she quickly earned the trust of our clients and our attorneys. Jackson Lewis is a unique place; we are stocked with lawyers who truly are passionate about people and the practice of employment law. We emphasize service and responsiveness, and Samantha is an ambassador of this culture."

Was your career goal to reach the leadership levels at a law firm? When I first started practicing, my goals were on a smaller scale—I wanted to excel as an associate, land my first client, impress the partners at the firm, etc. I took advantage of each of the opportunities that were presented to me at Jackson Lewis and each opportunity led to a new challenge. My advice would be to seek out those opportunities and accept the challenges that come with them.

Who had the greatest influence in your career that helped propel you to your leadership role? I have been fortunate to have many mentors during my career. And, while I may not have realized it initially, every person—every partner—who took the time to teach me and make me a better lawyer or a better manager, and trusted enough in me to provide me with an opportunity, was incredibly important to my development. From those who taught me to be a better writer, as painful as it was for them, or how to be a creative lawyer, all impacted me. Our prior firm chairman, Vincent Cino, gave me the opportunity to manage the Orange County office and later, to work with him on firm operations. Kevin taught me how to work with and support clients, and was a sounding board for me over the years as I learned to manage the Orange County office, and find my voice on the board. I am very thankful to them, and to all those who have guided me over the years.

What's an accomplishment that you are proudest of? My proudest professional accomplishment to date has been developing and building a team, then watching that team do great things while also paying it forward—showing others the support I tried hard to provide to them

With D&I in mind, how can women better position themselves for success and for leadership roles in law firms? I feel lucky to have grown up at Jackson Lewis, where I didn't have to spend a lot of time thinking about how to position myself for success, because it always felt like by working hard and caring about our people and our clients, success would come. There is a big difference between talking about valuing the voices of all attorneys and demonstrating real commitment to that mindset. My advice would be to find a place where you feel that support and where you feel empowered to go after what you want.

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