

How I Made Office Managing Partner: 'Start by Proactively Volunteering for Roles Within the Office,' Says Nadine Abrahams of Jackson Lewis

By Tasha Norman

Nadine Abrahams, Jackson Lewis, Chicago

Job title: Office Managing Principal (OMP).

Practice area: Labor and employment law.

Law school and year of graduation: I earned my J.D. from NYU School of Law in 1992.

How long have you been at the firm? Since 2007 (15 years). I became OMP of the Chicago office in June 2020 at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Were you a partner at another firm before joining your present firm? I was a partner at Fisher Phillips for approximately five years until I left in October 2007 to come to Jackson Lewis.

What are your key responsibilities and what unique challenges do you face as it relates to your role? My primary responsibility is managing the day-to-day operations of the Chicago office to ensure that we can deliver high-quality client service while maintaining profitability.

As OMP, my initial challenges were associated with returning to work in person and navigating the pandemic. Since that time, I have been focused on engagement and retention in the post-pandemic world. I am also constantly looking for ways to grow the office with lateral additions and expand the Chicago office's client base and profile. One of the toughest challenges is cost containment and profitability while advancing client representation standards, promoting warranted internal advancements, and retaining and developing excellent lawyers.

What's the best piece of advice you give to someone who wants to rise up the ranks to lead an office? Start by proactively volunteering for roles within the office, even as the most junior associate. For instance, in Chicago we have several committees that associates can join and even lead in the areas of marketing; pro bono; hiring; diversity, equity and inclusion; the summer associate program; our practicing and parenting attorney resource group; and event planning. Associates who demonstrate they are invested and enthusiastic about the office are well on their way towards rising in the ranks. Also, be patient. There is a lot of truth to the adage that "good things come to those who wait." Developing excellent legal skills and demonstrating initiative and taking ownership



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are the first steps to a successful career.

Who had the greatest influence in your career that helped propel you to your current role? I am very lucky to have had many mentors and colleagues who have influenced me along the way. Two who come to mind are Chicago Principal Jane McFetridge and Jackson Lewis' General

counsel John Nolan.

Jane recruited me to Fisher Phillips 20 years ago as an associate and has always supported my growth as an attorney and leader. I was elevated to partnership with her backing and promotion. Over the years, we have tried many cases together and left at the same time to join Jackson Lewis. John and I were co-chairs of the firm's Litigation group for many years and I like to think that his calm and measured approach to addressing very challenging situations has rubbed off on me.

Knowing what you know now, what advice would you give to yourself and what would you do differently? It is easy to become quickly over extended and pulled in multiple directions. I would have delegated more so that I could focus on other areas that are meaningful to me like community service and pro bono. As attorneys, we are in a position to tangibly impact underserved communities and make a positive difference in the lives of those in need. It is all too easy to lose sight of those goals if they don't remain a priority.

What three words would you use to describe your work mindset? Empathy, balance and excellence. Everyone has their individual struggles and challenges, and it is critical to understand what is going on to be able to provide support.



Nadine Abrahams of Jackson Lewis

(Courtesy photo)