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WOMEN OF INFLUENCE



BLAIR KAMINSKY

Company: Holwell Shuster & Goldberg LLP

Title: Partner and Member of the Management Committee

Where born: North Brunswick, New Jersey

Education: University of Pennsylvania (B.A.), Harvard Law School (J.D.)

How would you quickly describe your job and what you do to someone you just met?: As a partner at Holwell Shuster & Goldberg LLP, I litigate high-stakes, commercial disputes for both defendants and plaintiffs across the country in a variety of areas of the law. I also hold several leadership roles at the firm. I serve on the firm's management and recruiting committees, founded our D&I committee, and co-lead the firm's marketing and mentoring initiatives.

What attributes do you look for in a candidate when hiring?: Intelligence, eagerness to take initiative, and the kind of personality that I wouldn't mind being stuck in an airport at 3 a.m. with.

What mistake do young professionals make, and how would you advise them to avoid it?: I would warn young professionals not to approach their career like a checklist, ticking boxes as they move along. Instead, focus on rolling up your sleeves and accomplishing the task at hand – time and time again – to help make greater strides in your career.

Are you working from home, from the office or a mix of both?: I usually work from the office. While I enjoy the flexibility to work from home when necessary, I find that I am more productive in a space away from home. I also genuinely like my colleagues and find that working in their company leads to better collaboration and, in turn, much better work product.

How are you recruiting/retaining employees and keeping them engaged during the challenges of The Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting?: By New York standards, Holwell Shuster & Goldberg is a relatively small law firm. We all share a commitment to practicing in a tight-knit, collegial group, and we are proud of the culture we've built together. It's one that values teamwork, professionalism, and a respect for our people and their diversity. It's easy to talk about values like that, but truly living them – whether it's having a flexible work-from-home policy, creating a wellness room that new mothers can use to pump breast milk, or just taking a sincere interest in each other – is something else. For us, that's what keeps our lawyers and staff engaged and excited to come to work every day.

What time-management strategies or lessons-learned do you use to manage your schedule and meet your obligations?: Delegating is critical to time management, and it's a hard skill to master. It is also important to know when to say no, and to be keenly aware of when you should or should not participate in a project. One simple thing: I find it very helpful to have a calendar that is kept up-to-date and accessible to my colleagues.

Do you serve as a mentor for someone? If so, how do you fill that role?: Serving as a mentor is important to me. As a law firm leader, I believe I have a responsibility for the development of our younger lawyers and other professionals, like paralegals and interns. I worked with several colleagues to launch HSG's first formal mentoring programming, which pairs each HSG associate

with a partner mentor. As part of the program, I serve as a formal mentor to several associates. Informally, I am committed to championing all associates I work with, providing them opportunities to take the lead on important briefs, depositions and court hearings whenever feasible. In addition, I maintain my own policy of going out to lunch at least once a year with every female associate in the firm – and I strive to far exceed that. I want to ensure that they receive the growth opportunities I have had – including, importantly, “on-their-feet” experience making arguments in the courtroom (and boardroom).

Do you have a mentor yourself? If so, what do you get from that individual?: Mike Shuster, one of HSG's founding partners, has been an amazing mentor to me since I joined the firm. While I've learned quite a lot from Mike about the practice of law, including the importance of leading by example, he has constantly identified ways to help me grow through networking, arguing cases, participating in meetings and sharing new opportunities. In fact, my first argument at the firm came when Mike offered me the opportunity. I also appreciate the fact that he is always honest with feedback and constructive criticism.

What's the biggest challenge facing women who want to take on leadership roles, and what can be done to address that?: When I look around a meeting room, especially outside HSG, quite often I'm the only woman there. While the legal profession is making strides on gender equity, I believe that we need to make a greater, more conscious effort to lift women up into leadership roles – to give them a seat at the table. To do my own part, I make it a point to advocate for female associates.

What book have you read recently that you'd recommend?: I do not have as much time for leisure reading as I would like, but as a mother of two young boys, I've become an enthusiastic reader of “Captain Underpants.”

What's the farthest from New York City you've traveled?: My husband and I once attended a beautiful wedding in India, and we also spent a wonderful honeymoon in South Africa.

– Mark Mensheha