

How I Made Law Firm Leadership: 'Always Remain Client-Focused,' Says Laura Reathaford of Lathrop GPM

By ALM Staff

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Laura Reathaford, Lathrop GPM, Los Angeles

Job title: Partner in Charge of the Los Angeles office

Practice area: Labor & Employment

Law school and year of graduation: Dalhousie University, 1998

How long have you been at the firm? 3.5 years

What year were you promoted/elected to your current role? 2023

Were you a partner at another firm before joining your present firm? If so, which one, how long were you there and when did you leave? Yes. I was a partner at Blank Rome. I left in September 2019.

How would you describe your career trajectory (was it organic or an active pursuit)? I think my career has progressed because I have developed important client relationships and remained steadfast about client service. It has given me the freedom to decide how and where I want to practice law. I have moved around a bit which, ultimately, has led me to Lathrop GPM; the firm I consider to be the “perfect fit” for my practice, my personality and the way I want to practice law. I would not have been able to make these moves if I didn’t have a strong client base. I value these relationships tremendously and know that I would not be where I am without them.

What unique challenges do you face as it relates to your role? Finding top talent in today’s

competitive market, especially in Los Angeles, will be a challenge in my role. Law firms need to balance a desire to build a collaborative culture with the individual needs of every lawyer. I’ve seen this done successfully across our

firm and aim to continue to do so as we grow the LA office.

Who had the greatest influence in your career that helped propel you to your current role? Please provide name, job title and a brief explanation. Nancy Sher Cohen, the former partner in charge of the Los Angeles Office of Lathrop GPM has had the greatest influence in my career. Nancy and I met at Proskauer. Our offices were right next to each other and when we interacted, I thought, this is a woman of quality. What I love about Nancy is that she is an exceptional lawyer dedicated to delivering exceptional client service first – but she also put everything she had into being the Partner in Charge of the LA office. She built this office with top talent, and I hope I can continue this legacy.

How do you utilize technology to benefit the firm/practice and/or business development? The Los Angeles office, along with the rest of the firm, follows a flexible work policy allowing employees



Laura Reathaford,
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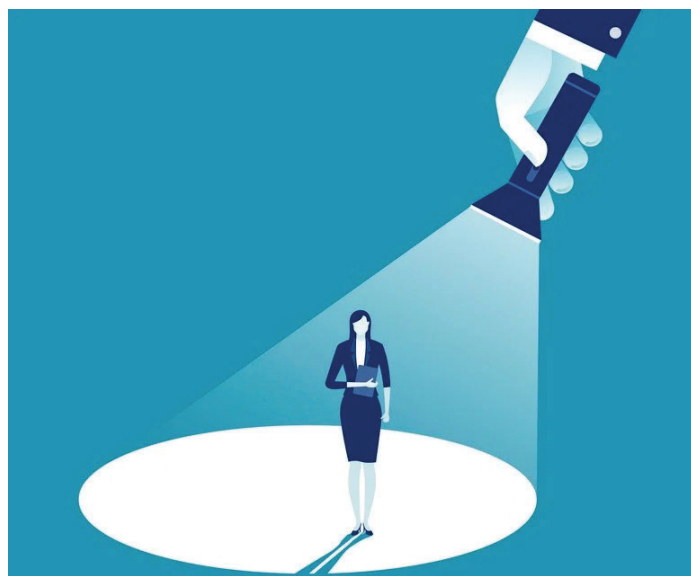
Courtesy photo

to work from home or in a satellite location while still fulfilling their day-to-day responsibilities. To support this, the firm replaced all desktop set-ups once our offices re-opened, allowing employees to keep the technology they took home for COVID in their home offices.

In addition, the firm has invested substantially in legal project management and the technology tools needed to support it. This flexibility makes us more productive and enhances our client service and is made possible by the firm's investment in technology, particularly over the past three years.

Knowing what you know now, what advice would you give to your younger self and/or what would you do differently? Always remain client-focused. Remind yourself every day that you have a career because clients trust you with their legal work. Advancing your career is only a small part of the success equation; serving your clients selflessly will keep you busy for the rest of your life.

Do you have a prediction on how the legal industry will evolve over the next several years? Right now, the legal profession has embraced the "work from home" model out of necessity, and I think that is important. However, I suspect we will see more people returning to the office in the next few years. Collaboration and discussion (whether it is an impromptu hallway discussion or over lunch) are key drivers of our success as lawyers. Training and education of younger lawyers is even more critical. As time goes by, I think we may see people organically



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coming together in the office more often to regain some of the nuance that's missed in virtual-only interactions.

As a law firm leader, what impact would you like to have on your firm and/or the legal industry as a whole? I am focused on educating my firm about the Los Angeles market and educating the Los Angeles market about Lathrop GPM. Our firm is relatively new to California and I want to see it grow with quality talent. I also want our existing clients to know that they have people here to help them if they need it. Having been a Labor & Employment lawyer in the Los Angeles market for the past 17 years, I'm hoping my first-hand experience, knowledge, and the connections I have made will positively impact our clients, the office, and the firm.

I feel very privileged to be in this leadership role especially as a woman and a L& E lawyer and hope I can inspire the younger generation of women in law.