



Positioning Yourself for Success: Get to Know Deborah Farone

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As part of a series with leaders in our industry designed to provide future leaders with career advice, tips and strategies for becoming their best professional selves, we asked Deborah Farone, the recipient of the first LMA Legacy Award for her contribution to the profession, and the former CMO of both Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP and Debevoise & Plimpton LLP, for her success tips on effectively managing your career.

What advice do you have for legal marketers who are new to the field and looking to build a professional brand?

The best way to build a brand as a professional is to establish a solid reputation for producing excellent work. Regardless of the number of speaking engagements or tweets you might log, if you are not turning out great results, those activities will have little or no value.

Learn from others around you and take every opportunity to seize new skills. Once

you master the work, then you can turn your focus on how to position yourself: Do you want to be known for your social media prowess or rather as a great manager of marketing staff? What makes you unique? Once you've figured that out, you can think about your objectives and utilize the appropriate mix of marketing tactics to get you where you want to go.

What do you think the key is for success as a legal marketer today?

Take responsibility for your own growth and continuing education. Read as much as you can about legal marketing and, just as important, about the practice areas in which you work. The number one compliment I hear from partners who are happy with their marketing staff is that "they really get me and my practice." While one of the reasons that legal marketers have a great challenge in their role is due to the point that they often need to focus on multiple practice areas. It's important to be entrenched in the practice's work and remain aware of any related developments that may be impacting the nature of the work. It's also simply vital to know what is going on in the world.

What is the key to your own success?

There hasn't been one magical key, but working hard and applying focus to each assignment, at least for me, has been vital. That has helped me along my career and now in my own consulting practice. While we all feel the need to multitask, I try to remember to pull back a bit from that approach. I find that I get my best work done when I am focused clearly on the client and their specific problem at hand. I also find that developing business relationships and friendships, not in a mercenary way but rather in a very authentic way, has been very helpful. It's great to have a network where you provide to support to one another.

What is the best career advice that you ever received?

My father, the most ethical human being I ever met, was a big believer in the importance of working with people who you trust, who are honest and who behave in a professional way. He always impressed upon me the need to work with people and for companies for which I had respect. I think as marketers our job is to advocate for organizations and missions. I would find it impossible to do my job if I worked with people or for a cause I didn't like or believe in. I have been fortunate to have worked with some wonderful lawyers at Cravath and Debevoise and with great management consultants at Towers Watson. Today, I am fortunate in that I have a group of clients whose work I greatly admire.

What do you love the most about what you do?

I love the process of digging in deep and finding the best approach to helping a client. There are no cookie cutter answers in marketing and what worked for us at Cravath may not work for every firm. Each company is different, with a unique set of issues. You really have to look closely at the type of work they are doing and their clients. You need to understand the nature of those relationships and the talents of the professionals, before you advise them. Only once you synthesize that information, can you can develop the right marketing, staffing or training plan.

Who is your role model and why?

I just chaired a program for PLI called “All Star Business Development for Lawyers.” At the program, Brad Karp, who masterfully leads the law firm Paul Weiss, pointed that very often, today’s successful rainmakers benefited by having strong role models when they were young lawyers. I’ve had several role models and mentors over time. At Debevoise, the late Bill Matteson, Bruce Yannett and Mary Jo White were each unbelievable role models to me and to many others. At Cravath, the late Bob Joffe, Evan Chesler, Allen Parker (now GC at Wells Fargo) and Sandra Goldstein were exceptional mentors, and each in their own way.

What women most inspire you and why?

I am inspired by my mother and my sister. My mom, Phyllis Brightman, has had an extraordinary career, first as a teacher and then as a top-selling real estate broker. She taught me to always try my best, regardless of any impediments or hurdles I might face. We joke about it now, but when I was in elementary school, she learned that I was not able to properly walk on a balance beam. Concerned that my lack of balance might hold me back in the future, she arranged over the summer to bring the beam to our house so that I could practice in the backyard. She wanted to prove to me that practice made perfect. While in my case, it was never to make perfect, at least I learned that with a lot of hard work, I could improve on just about anything. My sister, Dr. Rebecca Brightman, who inspires me on a daily basis, is an accomplished ob-gyn in private practice in New York City. She has inspired me to remain true to my beliefs, never compromise on my ethics and always continue to develop and learn new things.