

A True Partnership

An Interview with Valerie E. Radwaner,
Deputy Chair and Partner, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP

EDITORS' NOTE Valerie Radwaner has extensive experience advising a diverse range of clients, including corporate borrowers, financial institutions, sponsors and lenders in connection with acquisitions, divestitures and various financing transactions. She is a member of the Global Advisory Board of Women in Law Empowerment Forum and, in addition, she serves on the Advisory Committee of Thomson Reuters' Transforming Women's Leadership in the Law. She is a member of the 30% Club and a task force member of the Center for Talent and Innovation. Valerie has been recognized by Euromoney Legal Media Group in the "Best in Corporate Governance" category of its Americas Women in Business Law awards.



Valerie E. Radwaner

FIRM BRIEF Paul, Weiss (paulweiss.com) is a firm of more than 900 lawyers with diverse backgrounds, personalities, ideas and interests who collaboratively provide innovative solutions to clients' most critical and complex legal and business challenges. The firm represents the world's largest publicly and privately held corporations and investors as well as clients in need of pro bono assistance.

How do you define the Paul, Weiss advantage?

It's a combination of our culture and our deep mutual respect, as well as our commitment to client service, professionalism, pro bono service and excellence in everything that we do. All of these attributes are embedded in the firm's DNA and have never been stronger than they are today. We are fortunate to be able to represent extraordinary clients engaged in some of the world's most interesting and high-profile matters.

We're a true partnership in every sense of the word. We are, and have always been, a one-tier equity partnership. We are very proud of our culture and legacy.

Does the firm's focus on hiring the best talent lead to having a diverse workforce?

Our well-known, longstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion attracts a diverse group of the best and the brightest. Even so, we're always talking and thinking about how we can do even better when it comes to diversity. We engage in frequent conversations internally and with our clients and other business leaders about our commitment to help drive change.

Has your role as Deputy Chair impacted your involvement with clients?

My role in the firm has evolved, and so has my work with my clients. In my current role as Deputy Chair, I elected to move away from my

transactional practice and pursue the extraordinary opportunities presented by having the number-two position at Paul, Weiss. After practicing in the corporate finance area for about 25 years, I was ready to use my experience to take on new professional challenges. Now, I draw on my experience, perspective and years of practice to help inform and guide the firm's strategic priorities.

I might not be running corporate megadeals as I did for so many years, but I'm spending a significant amount of my time with our clients and leaders in

the legal community discussing larger issues that impact our industry and our profession, like diversity and gender issues. Our clients are significant voices in the continuing effort to make the legal profession one where all can flourish; clients are expecting now more than ever to see diverse teams of lawyers working on their matters from the beginning to the end.

Among the top tier firms, is differentiation possible and what makes Paul, Weiss unique?

What makes us unique is that we invest in our clients. We have a true partnership with them. Our relationships run deep and extend far beyond the particular matter or transaction we may be handling. We anticipate our clients' most important needs and always help them shine. We bring diverse voices to the table. We achieve remarkable results for our clients, and we collaborate closely. We have partnered with several clients on social justice pro bono initiatives, which are a natural complement to our client representations. Our collective energy and creativity strengthen our bonds with clients, and that dynamic is inspiring.

Are there ample leadership opportunities for women in the legal profession?

This is a fabulous time to be a woman in the legal profession. The conversations about gender equality and the significance of diverse voices at the table have never been louder. Business leaders are looking to Paul, Weiss for leadership in this area. We have been discussing gender equality for a very long time. Our percentage of women equity partners is at the very top among our Big Law peers. We see progress across the industry, but we must do more. We can never be complacent.

There is a tendency among young lawyers, particularly women lawyers, to focus on the assignment in front of them and not think more broadly about their professional trajectory. We address this issue by having very direct conversations. All lawyers at Paul, Weiss – including our women lawyers – are encouraged to think about their careers, their interests and their professional development.

The firm has advanced more women to leadership in the past several years and collaborates with its clients to deliver more opportunities for women to lead matters. We encourage our women lawyers to get involved in our women's network and mentoring communities early on. We engage our male partners in these discussions; their experiences and insights help to shape the conversation. We believe that the feedback, ideas and perspectives contributed by lawyers of different backgrounds and experiences help our women thrive at Paul, Weiss and beyond. Our firm encourages women lawyers to forge professional relationships with clients and connect with them outside any given matter. Ultimately, we engage our women in high-profile, interesting matters where they can make a real contribution and play leading roles.

What advice do you give young people interested in building a sustainable career in the law?

Above all, I tell them to do what they love. Once they've developed a solid base of skills, they need to find an area of the law that they enjoy. I'm a firm believer in taking a broad approach in law school, exploring different practice areas and finding an area where they are engaged and see an opportunity to thrive.

There is also no substitute for mentors, sponsors and role models. I am where I am today, in large part, due to the extraordinary lawyers, female and male, who guided me, taught me, pushed me and showed me many different paths to success. I learned very quickly that there is no single definition of success.

I counsel young people to be persistent and hardworking, and to have the will and courage to lead when others expect you to follow. Be flexible and try to add value beyond just doing extraordinary work. There is room at the top for all different styles of leadership; one doesn't have to fit into a particular mold or prototype. Keep in touch with the community you've built around you. I encourage everyone to stretch themselves. We often opt to do work that feels comfortable, but we grow most when we step outside of our comfort zones.

Finally, it's really important to have fun. I've always loved what I've done here.

What has made Paul, Weiss so special for you?

I joined Paul, Weiss thinking it was an incredible opportunity to learn how to be an exceptional corporate lawyer. I knew that I wanted to learn from the best, be surrounded by the best and be involved in really interesting and challenging representations with an eclectic group of sophisticated clients. My experiences here have been more satisfying and enjoyable than I ever dreamed possible. This is my second home, and I can't imagine not being a Paul, Weiss lawyer. ●