

Law360 Insurance Authority: Women In Insurance Law On Breaking Down Barriers

Building a better environment for women in the legal industry starts from the top, women in insurance law told Law360, underscoring the importance of mentorship, individuality and promoting women to leadership positions.

To mark International Women's Day, both junior and senior women attorneys share their experiences in the industry and offer words of advice.

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Robin Cohen

As chair of the New York City-based [redacted] and McKenna, Robin Cohen said it is important to have a diverse team with different perspectives and ideas.

"We tend to attract a very diverse group," Cohen said. "I think we're able to attract some of the best women in the city and in the country, actually ... because they see women in leadership positions."

Cohen began her career at [redacted], which she said she gravitated toward because the firm was committed to giving women and minorities opportunities. But that was not, and still is not, the case everywhere, she said.

"All of that, what I would call noise, completely goes away when [attorneys] come here. It's a pure

meritocracy,” Cohen said. “No one feels that subtlety that they had felt at larger firms, and part of it is because there’s a lot of women in leadership positions.”

“If you want to develop a great firm, and a great firm with great women, it’s not enough to hire a lot of women, you have to put them in actual leadership positions,” she added. “And you have to make sure when you’re doing compensation, that you’re fair.”

In addition to putting more women in leadership roles, Cohen said it is important to teach female attorneys how to develop business and encourage them to do so.

Cohen said she will often bring associates and partners to pitches, and now a number of them are doing pitches on their own.

“I’m very supportive of them starting to grow their own practice and bring in their own business. That’s very empowering, and I do not believe as many firms are doing that,” she said. “The more empowered women feel, and the more they feel they’re at a firm that’s going to support them in that regard, the more you’re going to keep them and the more they’re going to bring in business.”

Having been recognized as an influential woman in law, Cohen hopes to serve as a role model and convey that it is possible to have a great career and a great family, said the Cohen Ziffer chair, who is married with two children.

“When I was a junior associate, a lot of the women who were more senior were not on the top of the compensation chart, a lot of them didn’t have families,” Cohen said. “So I do think that I represent to many women that ... you can have a family, you can have a life outside of work, and still be successful and be at the pinnacle of your practice.”

Andrea Jung

Andrea Jung, an associate at Cohen Ziffer, said she chose to join the firm in 2022 due in part to the fact that it is woman-led.

But generally, there is still disparity when it comes to management and leadership roles at law firms, she said.

"It's getting better, but I think we definitely have a pipeline problem," she said, noting that even though more female students are graduating from law school, female attorneys are still underrepresented compared to their male counterparts.

"I think there's definitely implicit bias and stereotyping going on, and a lot of times I think female attorneys are underestimated," Jung said. While it can be exciting to dispel that belief, she said, it also puts a lot of pressure on female attorneys.

"Having a community of female lawyers is very helpful," she added. "I think having that community is key. That way you can brainstorm and share your issues and have that emotional support around you."

Building connections with both superiors and colleagues is also important, Jung said, especially for those who are just starting out in their careers.

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Robin Cohen

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