

# Spotlight On ... Jillian Raines

**You indicated that “culture and mentorship” are two things that are important to you. Your culture-quotient perspective may be unique because you have been at Big Law, were in-house at Apple and are now at a successful boutique. Describe the culture and mentorship differences you’ve seen among these three environments.**

The day-to-day of law firm lawyering is like a junior varsity and varsity team scrimmaging together in practice. Your colleagues are mostly other lawyers—everyone plays the same sport. Practically, there is a culture where teamwork and comraderies are usually high and junior attorneys do not have to look very far for mentors since senior attorneys were once in their shoes. The drawback to this can be that the ethos of Big Law is often dictated from the top and too often gets packaged as a one-size fits all approach.

In contrast, the day-to-day of in-house lawyers is like serving as the referee when the basketball and volleyball teams book the same practice court. Your colleagues are rarely lawyers and they often have varied, divergent objectives they need help working through. Although there is still a shared “corporate culture,” autonomy and high collaboration, you’re playing a different sport and more often this means you’re finding mentoring relationships from people at different levels of their career with different jobs, life experiences, and professional skills.

Although I have had excellent mentoring relationships in Big Law and in-house—what is unique about a boutique firm, and particularly Cohen Ziffer—is that there is a true sense of personal investment in our attorneys that brings out the best from my Big Law and in-house experiences. I know and work personally with everyone day-to-day. We don’t have a culture of competition that can be present at other law firms, and we embrace the in-house ethos that everyone has a role and can teach and learn

from each other regardless of seniority or background. We're all rowing in the same direction, but that doesn't necessarily mean everyone has to have the same "form" – and our culture backs this up.

**All employers and leaders say that professional development is important, but the walk often doesn't match the talk. Why do you think this is, what damage does this cause in the ranks of young professionals coming up and what is the net effect on the law firm or company?**

I would posit two reasons. First, lawyers are busier than ever lawyering. Taking time to mentor young professionals is not deadline-oriented and rarely pays immediate dividends, making it easier to deprioritize, particularly in an environment built around the billable hour. Second, in my experience, once an organization attempts to formalize professional development, people in the best positions to mentor are quickly disincentivized from personally investing in it and start assuming it's someone else's job. And in law firms or organizations where junior attorneys often float between multiple case teams or assignments and typically do not have a single supervisor, the absence of professional development can severely stunt an attorney's growth. The young lawyers are painfully aware of this deficiency and end up walking out the door because they feel the firm isn't a good fit. This, in turn, hinders a firm or company's capacity and often requires hiring lateral attorneys to fill in seniority gaps, an inefficient solution to the failure to develop young professionals.

**Cohen Ziffer has coined a term called "360-degree mentorship." Describe what this means and why a prospect or a client of Cohen Ziffer's should care.**

To me, "360-degree mentorship" means everyone at Cohen Ziffer remains open to being both teacher and student. The practice of law is not insulated from technology advancements and cultural shifts occurring around us and junior attorneys have a lot of insight to share. It's not some formalized trope where junior attorneys are expected to review their boss (something few actually feel comfortable doing anyway) – it's a more organic culture where we give space for all colleagues to share perspective and contribute ideas on strategy and process. 360-degree mentorship instills trust in and among our

attorneys, which is foundational to the success of any organization. For prospective or current clients, this is appealing because you won't need to question names on bills that you've never heard of and ask whether our associates are "up for the task."

**Also describe why a lawyer considering Cohen Ziffer should care about "360-degree mentorship" – whether a first year, 6<sup>th</sup> year or partner level?**

Not every lawyer is going to be enticed by "360-degree mentorship." In my career, I have come across plenty of lawyers who prefer to close the door to their office, work until the close of business, and start all over again the next day. But this tends to stifle mentorship, and at Cohen Ziffer, our case strategies are built upon face-to-face brainstorming in an environment where every attorney's perspective is valued. Attorneys who recognize that there is always something new to glean from your colleagues regardless of seniority should care about joining a firm that facilitates this type of collaboration. If you are a junior attorney, the partners you work with personally invest in your success and give you real opportunities to demonstrate your capacity while never leaving you stranded on an island. If you're a senior attorney, Cohen Ziffer junior associates are not simply "yes" people doing only the task you assign without taking initiative for more responsibility.

**Does authentic mentorship (where everyone is both a mentor and a mentee) drive culture – or does culture drive mentorship? Is it kind of a chicken and egg thing?**

I think authentic mentorship and culture do go hand-in-hand. The mentorship piece comes naturally when you employ individuals who are genuinely open to learning and growing, and who fundamentally believe that the sum of many perspectives leads to better outcomes. The culture of opportunity blossoms organically in an environment when people care about each other's growth and development and fundamentally believe that each person's success is everyone's success. The challenge is to make sure that this "culture" doesn't get chipped away or become more academic as an organization grows. At the end of the day, people matter. At Cohen Ziffer, from the very top down it's about

building a team of lawyers who are genuinely invested in the success and happiness of one another and invested in the success and happiness of our clients.

## Related People

Jillian Raines