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## Article

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# Voice of Experience: Robin Cohen, Partner, Kasowitz, Benson, Torres & Friedman

By Michelle Hendelman



"I knew very early on that I wanted to be a lawyer,

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but the path to where I am today was somewhat accidental.” Robin Cohen fell in love with law in elementary school when she participated in a program that gave her the opportunity to get firsthand experience in the legal field. “Students were able to leave school twice a week and do something that you were interested in pursuing later in life. I worked downtown in a common case court where the judge tried a lot of criminal cases.” This experience served as the foundation for Cohen’s bright future in the courtroom.

## Career Path

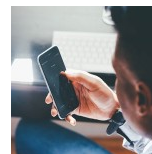
Cohen left law school unsure of the career path she wanted to follow, but she very quickly developed a passion for litigation. “When I got my first assignment, and was told it was an insurance case, I assumed I would be representing the insurance company, but in fact I was representing the policyholder,” said Cohen. She continued, “This really fit my personality. I enjoyed being the plaintiff and moving litigation forward.” Since then, Cohen has been a key player in the insurance coverage area, representing big organizations in complex, and sometimes even groundbreaking cases.

The last trial Cohen prosecuted in December definitely stands out to her as one case of which she is particularly proud. “The trial team consisted of attorneys I have practiced with for a very long time. We work together like a well-oiled machine. It was a complex case and the jury came back within five hours and found in favor of our client.” She continued, “From the culmination of all the mentoring work I had put into the team, I was so proud of them and the success we achieved.”

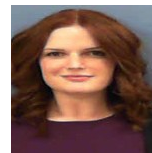
Another source of pride for Cohen in her career came when she was about seven or eight years out of law school and an important client asked her to be lead counsel on a big environmental coverage case. “I was very young to be doing this,” recalled Cohen, “and it was one of the first environmental coverage trials in the country. The client so was happy with the outcome of the trial, they gave us a party at the Rainbow Room. And it was as a result of that case that I was able to develop so many clients.”

## Women in Law

“There are not a lot of women lead trial counsels in my field and frankly in all of litigation.” Cohen noted, “One of the things I tell young associates who want to distinguish themselves and really succeed in law is to become a trial attorney.



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When I started about fifteen years ago, I was involved in one trial where I was the only woman taking an active role. Unfortunately, it continues to often still be the case today that men significantly outnumber women in the courtroom in large complex civil matters.”

Cohen feels strongly that young women in law are full of confidence and that the lack of female representation in litigation might have more to do with the system and the structure of the legal industry as a whole. “There is a subtle stereotype related to whether or not women are capable of being lead trial counsel that is neither overt nor conscious. Women have to compensate for this and push themselves to do more and prove that they are capable and have the talent to get the job done.”

For young women entering law, Cohen feels like one of the best things they can do to advance their careers is to simply work hard to prove that they are committed to putting in the time at work. She also stresses the importance of taking initiative in the office. “It was very clear to me early on that you did not want to be sitting behind a desk proofing documents,” said Cohen. “Young female associates should make their talents known and be their best advocate at work.”

Along with Linda Kornfeld, Managing Partner of Kasowitz’s Los Angeles office, Cohen is leading a new women’s initiative at the firm. She explained, “The more women leaders you have in an institution, the more impact you have on the economic bottom line.” She continued, “What we want to accomplish with the women’s initiative is to prove that there is a direct correlation between promoting women to leadership positions and the economic benefit to the firm.”

## Advice for Young People in Law

Cohen believes that one of the most important things a young associate can do as they work their way up the ranks is to learn how to distinguish themselves from the pack. She also stresses the importance of picking the right area of law, but her greatest piece of advice for young associates is to find a mentor or a group of peers that will help you stand out. “At the end of the day, it is the leaders in your group that will promote you up the ladder to partnership, who will be invested in your professional development, and who will tap into your talent.”

Developing young lawyers and helping them stand out is something that runs in

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Cohen's family. Her sister, who is an attorney in Philadelphia, recently established The Legal Help Center to assist underprivileged residents of the city navigate the judicial system as they resolve housing issues. This will also give young lawyers the opportunity to gain hands on experience in the courtroom early in their career. Since she feels so strongly that developing skills early on is so important, Cohen has been helping her sister by exploring options, working with law schools, and identifying students for the center.

Something that Cohen acknowledged as an important factor for women pursuing a career in law is selecting the right time to start a family. "I chose to have kids later in life because for me, it was easier to put in the hours and work 24/7 to become partner." She continued, "It might be more difficult for someone to do what it takes to become partner if they start a family early in their career." Cohen touches on a very important topic for women in professional careers right now, which is work/life balance. She also admits that the availability of technology today gives women the ability to juggle work and life more effectively.

## On Culture and Teamwork

Cohen places a lot of emphasis on the importance of teamwork and feels like the culture cultivated by the people at her firm is a big contributing factor to their success. "We get a lot of interesting and complex cases," said Cohen. She continued, "One thing we do when we first get a case is sit around the table as a team, in what we call a brain trust, and discuss the issues of the case. This way, we can develop a strategy together."

According to Cohen, it really is the people and the culture at Kasowitz that makes it a great place to work. "The firm is very dynamic and there are a lot of charismatic people at the top, which trickles down throughout the firm. We are encouraged to think outside the box and come up with creative strategies," noted Cohen.

## In Her Spare Time

Since her last trial, Cohen has been focusing a lot of her time on establishing and cultivating new clients and exploring the area of privacy law, which is gaining a lot of attention in the insurance coverage space right now. "I am currently involved in advising and litigating on some of the important issues of whether there is coverage for these particular clients. My team is on the forefront of these issues and it is something that I am currently very passionate about."

When she isn't working, Cohen is an avid spinner and enjoys spending time with her children and family. She spends a lot of her free time traveling throughout the Northeast cheering on one of her children, who competes in national tennis tournaments.

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