

Checking In

Practical Law Advisory Board Members Discuss Their Current Work and Key Legal Developments in Their Practice Area

Education: 1987: J.D., University of Chicago Law School; 1984: B.A., Knox College.

Career in Brief: 1988–present: Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP (2015–present: Head of Chicago Litigation Group; 1996–present: Government Enforcement and Litigation Partner; 1988–1996: Associate); 1987–1988: US Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, Law Clerk to the Honorable Richard D. Cudahy.

What do you think has been the biggest challenge facing attorneys during the COVID-19 pandemic?

One of the biggest issues is trying to keep people connected. The remote environment presents challenges to attorney development and fostering firm culture. It is important for attorneys to take conscious steps to keep strong connections with their co-workers and case teams.

What are the biggest challenges that your clients currently face, and how do you help them overcome those challenges?

Access to information is a significant challenge that litigation clients face as a result of the pandemic. Understanding the facts and gathering the core body of information takes longer and requires more planning than ever before in the current remote environment. It is important to consider this issue when setting deadlines, and to help clients figure out ways to obtain information and push back on requests that are not relevant.

What changes do you see on the horizon that will significantly affect your law practice?

The past year has demonstrated that there are many ways to leverage technology in the practice of law. Although the ability to hold virtual meetings existed long before the pandemic, this technology has proven to be life-altering for legal professionals over the past year. I believe we will see use of other technology that changes the way we practice law in the near future. There is still value in holding in-person meetings to brainstorm cases and interact with clients, but I expect that the legal industry will continue to embrace technology beyond the pandemic.

What technology did you or your firm incorporate into your practice during the COVID-19 pandemic that you think will continue post-pandemic?

Like most firms, we incorporated video technology to connect with each other, our clients, the courts, and regulators. I think we will continue to use this technology in situations where it can reduce costs and create efficiencies, such as brief out-of-state status hearings, but we will return to in-person attendance for important meetings and hearings. Overall, there will be more thought and consideration put into whether certain situations can or should be conducted virtually or in person.

What tips do you have for both junior and senior attorneys to best navigate the changes in their work environment and the practice of law because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Organic connections that would normally occur in the workplace, such as popping by someone's office, grabbing lunch or coffee, or even chatting in the elevator, are not happening. Both junior and senior attorneys must actively carve out time to reach out to each other to ensure that relationships continue to be built and that attorney development and firm culture do not suffer. Over the past year, clients have regularly called partners' cell phones when they need to discuss a matter, and it does not take much time or effort for a partner in this situation to say, "Let me circulate a dial-in." Doing so allows other team members to join the discussion as they would if the call came into the office, and encouraging full participation ultimately benefits both the client and the case team. At the same time, junior attorneys should take the initiative to reach out to partners and more senior attorneys to connect on a regular basis.

What do you wish attorneys knew about Practical Law? Practical Law covers a wide range of timely topics. I regularly read the resources to help stay up to date in my practice.

What career advice would you give to associates that you wish someone had given to you early in your career? Be conscious of maintaining connections with the people you meet along the way, which will prove to be



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both personally and professionally rewarding. Much of my business comes from contacts I met earlier in my career who I now consider friends. Moreover, working with those friends will make your job more enjoyable. It is much more difficult to rebuild a lost connection than it is to dedicate time to maintaining relationships.

What are some of the biggest challenges you faced throughout your career, and how have you overcome them?

Achieving work-life balance early in my career was a particular challenge, especially as a parent. As technology improved, I aggressively used it to create more space for things like my kids' basketball games or other school events. Technology helped me become a better parent.

If not an attorney, what would you wish to be?

My dream job would be playing the piano for the E Street Band. Admittedly, I would need to get much better at the piano than I currently am!

What has been the most important pro bono project that you have worked on recently?

I am currently representing a coalition of public interest groups in a lawsuit that is designed to improve access to voter registration through driver's license facilities. In a time when voting rights are a critical issue, I am proud to work with a team of litigators at Skadden to help address this problem.

What are your hobbies outside of work?

One of my hobbies is playing the piano, which I find fun and relaxing and helps me clear my head. During the pandemic, given that I was no longer spending much time on the road or watching plays at the theater, I expanded my use of audiobooks and podcasts. I am sure I will continue to enjoy these activities as the world reopens. 🎹