

How I Made Partner: 'Be the Lawyer You Would Want to Hire,' Says Leslie Demers of Skadden

By ALM Staff

May 15, 2026

Leslie Demers, 38, Partner at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, New York, New York

Practice area: Intellectual property litigation

Law school and year of graduation: Columbia Law School, 2013

The following has been edited for style.

How long have you been at the firm?

I joined Skadden as a summer associate during law school and started full-time after graduation in 2013. I have been at the firm for over 12 years.

What was your criteria in selecting your current firm?

When I was considering where to start my legal career, I was looking for a firm with a strong technology litigation practice, a trial-minded approach, and a deep bench of talent across broad practice groups. I wanted to be at a place where I could work on high-stakes, complex matters with people who were not only leaders in their fields but also genuinely good colleagues. Skadden stood out for its reputation in IP and technology litigation, its collaborative culture, and the opportunity to learn from and work alongside some of the best in the profession.

Were you an associate at another firm before joining your present firm? If so, which one and how long were you there?

No, I have been with Skadden since graduating from law school.



Courtesy photo

Leslie Demers of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom.

What do you think was the deciding point for the firm in making you partner? Was it your performance on a specific case? A personality trait? Making connections with the right people?

I believe the decision was based on a combination of factors. Consistency in delivering results for a broad base of clients, a relentless commitment to solving clients' problems, and a commercial, practical approach to litigation were all important.

I have always tried to approach every matter with precision and ownership, anticipating issues and thinking proactively about both legal and business strategy.

Building strong relationships with clients and colleagues, and being a steady presence

in high-pressure situations, also played a role. At Skadden, it is hard to make partner based on one big win—partnership requires showing you can deliver at a high level, time and again.

Who had or has the greatest influence in your career and why?

I have been fortunate in receiving mentorship from many on the path to partnership, starting back when I was a budding scientist in undergraduate benefiting from the mentorship of a brilliant biochemist. Since joining Skadden, it has been a joy to learn from so many talented colleagues, including the head of Skadden's IP litigation group Doug Nemec and the head of Skadden's IP & technology group, Resa Schlossberg—whose around-the-clock guidance has shaped me into the lawyer I am today. Doug and Resa have each set the standard for excellence, not only in their command of the law and strategic thinking, but also in their generosity with their time and willingness to invest in the development of more junior lawyers. I am grateful for their mentorship and the example they set for what it means to be both a formidable advocate and a supportive colleague.

What advice would you give an associate who wants to make partner?

Take ownership of your work and your reputation from day one. Be the lawyer you would want to hire: responsive, reliable, creative, and always prepared. Don't just master the facts, anticipate what's coming next and think creatively about how you can solve problems for your clients and your team. Because we strive to be true partners

with our clients, it is important to know their business, their objectives, and be thoughtful about practical solutions to meet their goals. The best lawyers are those who see the bigger picture and offer practical, business-minded solutions. Finally, stay relentlessly curious—our field is always evolving, and your willingness to learn and adapt will set you apart.

When it comes to career planning and navigating inside a law firm, in your opinion, what's the most common mistake you see other attorneys making?

While it's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day, it's important to be intentional about your career. Seek out opportunities to lead in your field outside of your case work, participate in firm initiatives, and understand the broader business context for your clients even if it is not on the clock. During busy times it can also be challenging to keep up with your network and mentoring. We should not lose sight of this, not only does this contribute to the firm's growth, but they are important objectives for personal growth (and, in my experience, happiness).

What challenges, if any, did you face or have to overcome in your career path and what was the lesson learned? How did it affect or influence your career?

I have served a leading role in my fair share of ultra-challenging cases. That is just one aspect I love about Skadden: we have the privilege of litigating our clients' most important, and most complex, matters. I relish turning setbacks into opportunities,

crafting and recrafting narratives for trial, and finding the solution to problems in high pressure environments. These experiences reinforced the importance of staying steady under pressure and always keeping the client's broader business objectives in mind.

Knowing what you know now about your career path, what advice would you give to your younger self?

Embrace challenges and rise above the setbacks, those are the moments that will shape your growth and define your career. If you are comfortable, you're not growing. Sign up for the extra speech, write the extra article, and take the extra lunch with a connection. These profile building activities are just as important for career advancement as the billable hour.

How do you utilize technology to benefit the firm/practice and/or business development?

As a technology litigator it is safe to say that technology is integral to my practice. We use advanced tools for document review, legal research, and data analysis, which allow us to work more efficiently and deliver better results. Careful use of generative AI and other analytics help us gain insights in ways that we could not before, and ultimately provide more value to our clients. Staying at the forefront of technology not only improves our service but also helps us anticipate and address emerging legal issues for our clients on their most important matters.

How would you describe your work mindset?

I would describe my mindset as commercial, practical, and relentless. I am committed to solving my clients' problems with a tenacious focus on their business objectives. I strive to be proactive, steady under pressure, and always prepared to turn challenges into opportunities.

Do you have any advice for improving work-life balance or promoting mental wellness to avoid burnout and maintain your career momentum?

It's important to invest in your life outside of work—relationships and interests that keep you grounded and energized. Staying connected to what motivates you, both professionally and personally, is essential for fulfillment in this field. After all, it is a marathon, not a sprint.

If you participate in firm or industry initiatives, please mention the initiatives you are working on as well as the impact you hope to achieve.

I am deeply involved in our firm's summer associate and recruiting programs. It is an honor to have a role in selecting the next generation of Skadden lawyers and mentoring them starting in their earliest days. Skadden invests an extraordinary amount of time into mentoring and recruiting, and that investment pays dividends. I am continuously impressed by the new talent at Skadden and pleased to help them start their legal careers.