

# How I Made Partner: 'Focus on Being the Best Advocate for Clients,' Says Lauren Reichardt of Cooley

By ALM Staff

January 27, 2025

**Lauren A. Reichardt, 37, Partner at Cooley, New York, New York**

**Practice area:** Business restructuring

**Law school and year of graduation:**

Brooklyn Law School, 2014

*The following has been edited for style.*

**How long have you been at the firm?**

I have been at the firm for eight years.

**What was your criteria in selecting your current firm?**

I was looking for a firm where I would gain substantive experience early on, where there would be opportunities at the junior level to challenge myself and get out of my comfort zone to learn through experiences. Community also was important to me. I wanted mentors and leaders who were supportive of my career and development as a lawyer. Cooley has given me all these opportunities.

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

I was an associate at Hughes Hubbard & Reed for two years before joining Cooley.

**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 it is my ability to take ownership of matters, see the big picture and also the small issues, and develop strategies for clients to achieve their goals. I also think my ability to connect with clients when their companies are experiencing

financial distress and when management may be going through some of their most stressful times played a big part in my elevation to partner. I have a true “bedside manner” when communicating with management, directors, investors or founders and when advising clients through the different strategies available. I am strategic and offer practical, business-minded advice when counseling clients through a distressed acquisition and provide my clients with all the information needed to make informed decisions. This has allowed me to build trust with other partners in my group, who have given me opportunities to lead board meetings or management calls, which in turn gave me a lot of experience counseling clients in distressed situations during an earlier part of my career than I otherwise would have been able to achieve.

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

Diane Lifton, now senior vice president and head of legal at Sumitomo Pharma, who was a partner at Hughes Hubbard when I was a very junior associate. I also worked with her when I was a paralegal at the firm before law school. Diane has always been an incredible mentor to me. As a very junior associate, I had a conversation with her once where she talked to me about



Lauren Reichardt of Cooley.

Courtesy photo

one day making partner and whether it made sense to specialize in a particular area of law earlier or later to achieve that goal. What really struck me about the conversation at the time was that she saw me as someone who could make partner at a law firm one day, and that gave me the confidence to see myself the same way. It's hard to believe in yourself if you don't think the people around you believe in you. She gave me the confidence at a very early stage to envision myself where I am now.

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

Don't keep it a secret if you want to make partner. You need to share your goal with the partners you work with so they can help ensure you get the right experience. No one will come knocking on your door one day offering you the title. Becoming partner takes a lot of hard work, and associates must get the right experience to get there. Those opportunities do not just fall into your lap—you need to let people know that making partner is something you want to achieve so those around you can support you along the way and make sure you have the right experiences at each stage of your career to get there.

**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?**

I often see other attorneys keep to themselves. They work hard and bill a ton, but don't spend time cultivating relationships across the firm. It's important for attorneys in the firm to know and trust you, and you must be a good firm citizen across the board. And always remember to give back to junior associates by mentoring them and paying it forward.

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

I don't have enough fingers to count the number of times I was the only woman in the room,

especially in restructuring. However, I've been lucky to have incredible women mentors who are trailblazing in the field—including Cathy Hershcopf—a senior attorney at Cooley who has given me so much support since my first day at the firm. She has challenged me in many ways and has trusted me time and again with her clients. I'm also lucky to work daily with Cullen Speckhart, Cooley partner, chair of the firm's business restructuring group and partner in charge of our D.C. office. Seeing these smart, successful women in leadership roles certainly influenced me to pursue partnership at Cooley.

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

There were many times I thought that making partner simply wouldn't be in the cards for me—whether because the process is so competitive or because I didn't think I was good enough. I would tell my younger self to not distract myself with those thoughts and instead focus on being the best advocate for our clients that I can be.

**Do you utilize technology to benefit the firm/practice and/or business development?**

I rely on Zoom daily to connect with other members of my practice group and the firm. We have associates and partners in business restructuring in D.C., Los Angeles and Chicago, and Cooley is a global firm with offices across the U.S., Europe and Asia. Connecting through Zoom and seeing colleagues and clients face to face—even if not in person—has allowed me to cultivate meaningful relationships with clients, mentor associates and lead teams without being in the same office or conference room.

**How would you describe your work mindset?**

Treat every client like your most important client. That includes small clients for whom you have one-off or very small matters, your largest clients that may take up a majority of your time each day, and internal referral sources from within the firm.