

How I Made Partner: 'If You Want It, Say It Loud and Proud' Advises Cooley's Dee Bansal

"It is hard to make partner at any firm, but it's even harder if no one knows about your goals, ideas and contributions."

By Tasha Norman

Dee Bansal, 37, Cooley

Office: Washington, D.C.

Practice area: Antitrust investigations and litigation.

Law school and year of graduation: University of Virginia School of Law, 2010.

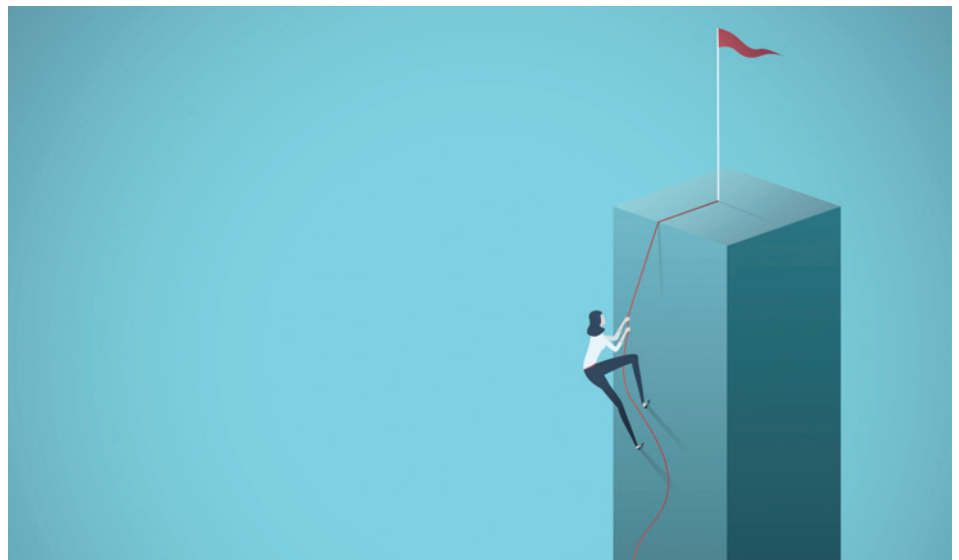
How long have you been at the firm? Since December 2012.



Dee Bansal

Courtesy photo

How long were you an associate at the firm? December 2012-December 2019.



Were you an associate at another firm before joining your present firm? I was an associate at the law firm Winston & Strawn, in Washington D.C., where I practiced for roughly two years, before leaving in December 2012.

What year did you make partner at your current firm? I made partner in October 2019, which became effective on Jan. 1, 2020.

What's the biggest surprise you experienced in becoming partner? I was surprised, humbled and inspired

at the amount of support I received from the Cooley professional staff and associate body—many of whom told me how much it meant to them to see home-grown and diverse talent cultivated and promoted. I think this was not only a reflection of Cooley's strong culture, but also a testament to the importance of elevating diverse candidates.

What do you think was the deciding point for the firm in making you partner? Cooley has a two-year partnership process that strongly

emphasizes a candidate's ability to present a forward-looking business plan and practice—an objective that reflects more than being an excellent lawyer but also demonstrates the ability to develop a practice that makes sense with the Cooley platform now and ten years from now. I don't think there was any one factor that sealed the deal. Rather, I think it was a combination of demonstrating leadership, a strong personal brand, dedication to the firm, and a vision for growth.

Describe how you feel now about your career now that you've made partner. When I made partner, a well-respected senior attorney congratulated me and shared this small piece of wisdom: "the first day of partnership is the real first day of your legal career—everything up until now has just been preparation." I still don't know how I feel about that (that's a lot of preparation!), but I do think that, in many ways, it rings true. I see partnership as a big step forward in developing my practice and client base, but I also see it as the continued ability to learn from all the high-caliber talent around me.

What's the key to successful business development in your opinion? I think internal exposure is critical. When people talk about business development, they tend to focus on developing external relationships, but I think as a senior

associate/junior partner, building and strengthening your internal network within your firm, can be just as—or even more—important. If your colleagues know you and know what you do, it's more likely that they will call you when issues in your realm of expertise arise. There are many ways to build these internal relationships outside of your day-to-day work—through committees, pro bono, or fundraisers. Everyone has a lot going on, and it can feel impossible to fit it in, but I think it's very beneficial in the long term.

What's been the biggest change, day to day, in your routine since becoming partner? I think the biggest change is that, after becoming an owner, you start to think as an owner. That has manifested in me spending a lot more time thinking about strategy, cost management, pitch opportunities, team management and leadership roles. I have also found that my colleagues rely on me a lot more to have the answers to complicated issues, which has pushed me to think harder about how to tackle tough questions and be resourceful to meet clients' needs.

Who had the greatest influence in your career that helped propel you to partner? There are so many exceptional attorneys that have been instrumental in my career and whom I'm forever indebted to, including

Jacqueline Grise, Mike Klisch and Howard Morse, all partners at Cooley (in our antitrust and litigation practices). They have been invaluable mentors and advocates. Not only did I learn from their excellent legal skills, but all three pushed me to think about how to develop a practice that merges my passion for litigation with my love of antitrust and provided countless hours of support along the way. I truly look forward to continuing to practice with and learn from them.

What's the best piece of advice you could give an associate who wants to make partner? Don't be afraid to commit to wanting to become partner. I think sometimes there is a tendency to shy away from committing to it, because it's difficult and there's always a chance of failure. It is hard to make partner at any firm, but it's even harder if no one knows about your goals, ideas and contributions. So, if you want it, say it loud and proud. It will help you find people around you to support you and also will help you stay accountable to yourself.



Check out more career advancement advice and insights on ALM's Professionals Network on LinkedIn. We are excited about this pivotal group. Click [here to join](#).