

How I Made Partner: 'I Accepted That When I Was Truly Myself, I Was the Best I Could Be,' Said Lindsay Hutner of Greenberg Traurig

"I am scrappy with a little bit of a chip on my shoulder—I am also dogged, loyal, practical, a good delegator, funny, down to earth, and good with people. Once all of that came together, I brought in more business, I had more "wins," I was happier; I was truly ready to become shareholder."

By Tasha Norman

Lindsay Hutner, 41, Greenberg Traurig, San Francisco.

Title: Co-chair of the firm's Labor & Employment Practice's Employment Litigation & Trials Group.

Law school and year of graduation: USC Gould School of Law, Class of 2005.

How long have you been at the firm? Since June 2013—8 years. I was an associate for about 3.5 years—I was elevated to of counsel in 2017 and then shareholder in 2020.

Were you an associate at another firm before joining your present firm? Shook Hardy and Bacon, 2005-2006; Akin Gump / Hunton & Williams (my group left Akin to open the Hunton SF office) 2007-2009; Miller Law Group 2009-2013; Greenberg Traurig 2013-present.

What's the biggest surprise you experienced in becom-

ing partner? The opportunity to collaborate on numerous committees within the firm and invitations to take leadership roles within the firm, such as the Employment Litigation and Trials Group. It is challenging but very rewarding when you step back and notice that these people who are at the top of their respective industries consider you a peer and emerging leader.

What do you think was the deciding point for the firm in making you partner? While I can't speak to the turning or decision point, I can say that I came into my own upon making of counsel in 2017 and more keenly developed the skills and traits that made me uniquely skilled as an employment litigator.

I always wanted to become a shareholder at Greenberg Traurig, not solely because I felt it was the



Lindsay E. Hutner

courtesy photo

pinnacle I needed to reach as an employment litigator. I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it—I could still be a mom, a wife and full-time litigator without compromising who I am as a person. One of the best lessons I reflected on and accepted when I became of counsel, was that any time in my life where I tried to be someone I wasn't or tried to emulate those who I felt were smarter or more successful than me, I did not succeed or thrive. I accepted

that, when I was truly myself and stopped trying to be someone else, I was the best I could be, and it gave me an immense amount of confidence. I am scrappy with a little bit of a chip on my shoulder—I am also dogged, loyal, practical, a good delegator, funny, down to earth and good with people. Once all of that came together, I brought in more business, I had more “wins,” I was happier; I was truly ready to become shareholder.

When it came time for my elevation, I had a team of colleagues who offered their unconditional support of my candidacy. More than anything else, however, I was able to prove that I was a trusted partner to our clients. I became the go-to resource for many clients, not only because of my excellent work, responsiveness and diligence but because I took the time to understand their business and become their friend.

Describe how you feel now about your career now that you’ve made partner. I feel that, as a shareholder, I have a responsibility to bring up others as I rise in my career, and nothing brings me more joy than to succeed as a team and see associates do things for the first time under my guidance. I have always said that litigation is a team sport, and witnessing an associate examine a witness, take a deposition, handle a hearing or

accomplish some similarly “scary” feat for the first time are highlights for me.

What’s the key to successful business development in your opinion, and how do you grow professionally while everyone is working remotely? The key to successful business development, in my opinion, is being yourself, listening to your client or prospective client, surrounding yourself with a great team and engaging in business development activities you enjoy. If you are not being yourself, clients will be hard-pressed to give you their business.

Who had the greatest influence in your career that helped propel you to partner? My dad, also a litigator, had the greatest influence on my career choice. When I was growing up, I knew I wanted to be a just like him. I have witnessed his mentorship, humility, loyalty and sense of humor firsthand, all characteristics that have greatly influenced who I am as a litigator and colleague. Sharing the highs and lows with him and having him as a confidante are some of the best parts of being a lawyer. Even after all this time, I still want to be just like him.

Edith Matthai and her late husband Jim Robie, of Robie & Matthai, were my first bosses in the legal field. I worked for them the summer



Credit: Shutterstock.com

following my 1L year and through law school. Having Edith as one of the first real touchpoints in my career was an amazing blessing. Knowing there were people like her in the legal community meant there could be people like me. Her husband, Jim, was also one of my early champions. I remember him speaking at my law school graduation dinner and saying he envisioned me arguing in front of the Supreme Court one day. I never forgot their faith in me.

Jonathan Hutner, my husband, has been my greatest cheerleader and provided me with unconditional support throughout my career. Without my husband’s support, I would not have been able to excel at my career.

What advice you could give an associate who wants to make partner? In addition to working hard,

I advise associates that to make partner you need to:

- *Know yourself, not only as a lawyer but as a person.*
- *Find loyal people at all levels whom you can trust to have your back as you have theirs. As I mentioned before, litigation is a team sport, and holding one another up through the trials and tribulations of this career will pay dividends. Also, there will be disappointments, but use those disappointments to make you better.*
- *Always pick up the phone, because you never know who will be calling. One day about seven years ago, a new shareholder to the firm had a long-standing client who needed urgent employment advice in California. I was the one to pick up the phone and helped the client through their emergency. That one phone call has turned into one of my most productive client*

relationships. So, unless it is someone selling an extended car warranty, pick up the phone.

What challenges, if any, did you face or had to overcome in your career path and what was the lesson learned? This career is full of challenges—whether it was having a hard 1L year in law school, not getting the job I wanted or losing a big case—the one thing that has always served me well is reminding myself of my values, who I am as a person, a lawyer, a mom, and falling back on those values. For example, I remember starting law school and it was the first time in my life where I was intimidated by school and my brilliant classmates, which caused me to struggle during my 1L year. I felt like I did not belong, everyone was smarter than me, and trying to emulate those “smarter people”

certainly did not improve my grades. During my 1L summer at Robie & Matthai I gained a lot of confidence working in a real-world environment, so when I came back for my 2L and 3L years, I had a lot of faith in myself and excelled where I didn't my first year. That experience instilled in me that I don't have to be like everybody else—so when confronted with challenges or disappointments, I always sit back, remind myself who I am, what my core beliefs are as a lawyer, mom, wife, etc., and things tend to right themselves.

What lessons, if any, did you learn in 2020 (the year of COVID19) I learned to be a lot more patient—becoming a part-time kindergarten teacher really helps with that last lesson—because sometimes just getting through the difficult stuff is a success.

