Recognizing Excellence

MADISON MORROW LEE
Parker, Hudson Rainer & Dobbs

Madison Morrow Lee represents national and regional banks, private credit lenders, and commercial borrowers in syndicated and single-lender transactions, with a focus on middle market asset-based loans. Her creativity and skill allow her to efficiently represent clients' legal interests. Madison's practice involves structuring, negotiating, and documenting secured lending transactions for a variety of industries, and her experience includes acquisition financing, healthcare financing, and cross-border financing transactions. Additionally, Madison has a firm understanding of transactions involving unique structuring issues, complicated collateral packages, and complex intercreditor arrangements. Madison's client-centered approach ensures that her clients receive invaluable and dedicated representation, and her exceptional interpersonal skills are advantageous in negotiating effectively on behalf of her clients.

Madison is a former SFNet 40 Under 40 Award honoree. She also serves as a member of the SFNet local Atlanta chapter emerging leaders board and as a member of the Rose Council Board for Wake Forest University School of Law. Madison has an undergraduate degree from Vanderbilt University and her J.D. from Wake Forest University School of Law.

What advice would you offer to women just starting out in the industry? What is the best advice you ever received?

The best advice I ever received was to be willing to step outside of your comfort zone and push yourself in areas where you are still developing your skillset. I would impart this advice to women starting out in this industry too. Anyone beginning a career in the secured lending industry is not expected to automatically know all of the ins and outs. For women (including myself), this can often lead to the dreaded imposter syndrome or a hesitancy to take on new challenges. Instead, push yourself to face these challenges head on. Ask questions when you do not know the answer, learn from mistakes, and grow your knowledge base one step at a time. This is all a part of the process of building a successful career.

What do you know now that you wish you knew in the beginning of your career?

So much! Specifically, two thoughts jump to mind that I wish I had known at the outset. The first is that because someone is outspoken or appears confident does not necessarily mean that they are more knowledgeable or sophisticated than you. Often, hesitancy to immediately settle on a conclusion means that you are likely more considerate in your thought process. In fact, I find that the very best practitioners are not afraid to admit when faced with something new or if they do not immediately know the answer. This is not a weakness, but a sign of intelligence and good judgment. I think that women are, at times, more naturally inclined to question their abilities when confronted with a topic in which they lack confidence. Had I known that confidence does not always equate with skill, I would have felt more comfortable with my capabilities and approach.

Secondly, at the beginning of my career, I would frequently compare myself to my peers. However, constantly measuring yourself and your career against others is not a helpful way to grow and can lead to unnecessary anxiety. Rather, I learned to focus on how to best develop my own experience and skillset and not to look to others for validation. To accomplish this, I recommend periodically taking time to consider your accomplishments (both major and minor). Allow yourself to appreciate your progress!

What role has mentorship/sponsorship played in your career?

Both mentorship and sponsorship have played critical roles in advancing my career. I have been lucky to have many mentors—colleagues and others in the secured lending industry whom I look up to. A mentor can provide you with guidance on how to build your ideal career. I am a firm believer that a good support system can take you places where you never even knew you were capable of going. Seek out guidance from others, and then, when the time comes, pay it forward by being willing to mentor others.

Sponsorship also is a key component of building a career, in particular as a woman in a male-dominated field like secured lending. I have had sponsors willing to advocate for me, which in turn enabled me to advocate for myself. Those who have sponsored me throughout my career have been vital to my career journey.