

How I Made Partner: 'I Developed a Reputation for Being Dedicated, Dependable and Accountable,' Says Audra Eidem Heinze of Banner Witcoff

"When times get tough, look away to the future and then settle down to meet your challenges with nerves of steel."

By Tasha Norman

Audra Eidem Heinze, 38,
Banner Witcoff, Chicago.

Practice Area: Intellectual Property.
Law school and year of graduation: Texas Wesleyan University (now Texas A&M University); 2009.

How long have you been at the firm? I was a summer associate in 2008 and started as an associate in 2009. I was elected shareholder in 2014 and principal shareholder in 2017.

What's the biggest surprise you experienced in becoming partner? I appreciate more than ever how important it is to work with associates you can depend on. If you are a strong associate, word of that travels fast.

What do you think was the deciding point for the firm in making you partner? I worked with as

many partners as possible with the same goal in mind: Deliver superior work product. That typically meant working late nights and through the weekend, along with other personal sacrifices. I also honed my writing and analytical skills by learning from lawyers recognized as the best, both in my firm and outside my firm. Did I make mistakes? Yes. But I owned up to them, took steps to address them, and made sure not to repeat them. In the end, I developed a reputation for being dedicated, dependable and accountable.

Describe how you feel now about your career now that you've made partner. The old adage, "find a job you love and you'll never work a day in your life," is true. Every litigation brings its own challenges that require different legal strategies



Audra C. Eidem Heinze
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and outside-the-box thinking. You never stop learning in this profession, which is one of the reasons I love it.

What's the key to successful business development in your opinion and how do you grow professionally while everyone

is working remotely? My firm has allowed me to work remote for over 10 years, so my office didn't change much in the COVID-era. However, pre-COVID, I usually traveled several times a month for work, which allowed me to continue developing business relationships. In the COVID-era, a phone call is no substitute for face-to-face interaction. While repeated video calls can be draining, they are still necessary to foster relationships.

Who had the greatest influence in your career that helped propel you to partner? I had several mentors that encouraged me as a young lawyer and challenged me in ways that enhanced my legal skills. My law professor, [Everett Chambers](#), was one who helped guide me through

the stress of being a first-year associate. One of his many words of wisdom to me: when times get tough, look away to the future and then settle down to meet your challenges with nerves of steel.

What advice you could give an associate who wants to make partner? The first few years as an associate can be exhausting, especially if you're putting in the time and effort to excel. Don't get too discouraged because you'll eventually find your rhythm as your confidence and abilities grow. And remember, it's called the "practice" of law for a reason.

What challenges, if any, did you face or had to overcome in your career path and what was the



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lesson learned? I've always had a strong work ethic, but becoming a new mom while an associate forced me to reevaluate how I balanced work and life. I trusted my instincts and raised the issue with my firm/litigation teammates, even though that's historically a 'taboo' topic in the legal profession. I quickly realized how fortunate I am to work at a firm that has allowed me to balance work and life. Unfortunately, I also realize that not all lawyers share a similar experience.