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## How I Made Partner: 'Always Take the Initiative,' Says Chris Galfano of Banner Witcoff

"Always be available and responsive, always be on time with work product, and always take the initiative."

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How I Made It

By ALM Staff | April 01, 2024 at 11:00 AM



### Chris Galfano, **Partner at Banner Witcoff, Chicago, Illinois**

Practice area: Patent prosecution

Law school and year of graduation: Chicago-Kent College of Law, 2015

*The following has been edited for style.*

How long have you been at the firm?

10 years

What was your criteria in selecting your current firm?

I was searching for a firm that included a path to work as a law clerk or patent agent while attending law school. Moreover, during the interview process each attorney that interviewed me described the firm culture as expecting each new hire to become a partner at the firm. I thought the expectation that every associate would make partner someday was a distinguishing factor for our firm.

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

N/A

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 think the deciding factor was an extensive history of working with many different firm attorneys across each of the firm offices, for a variety of clients rather than focusing on one or two clients for one or two senior partners. I made an effort to travel to our other offices to spend some time working with other attorneys from D.C. and Boston in particular.

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

Fortunately, the attorneys at Banner Witcoff are amazing and I was fortunate to have many individuals provide invaluable advice and instruction on how to be a dependable associate. One individual in particular took the time to explain to me that my client as a young associate was the partner for whom I was working. That advice was probably the best practicing tip I received as a new attorney and I am forever grateful for that perspective that individual provided.

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

Simple—always be available and responsive, always be on time with work product, and always take the initiative.

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 think the biggest mistake is the expectation that a law firm owes you something and the firm should feed you work rather than you searching out and seeking work for yourself.

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?

The transition to remote work for all employees during COVID was a challenging time for attorneys working in patent prosecution. Coordination with your assistant is critical due to USPTO filing requirements for patent applications. Your assistant is integral to being a successful patent practitioner. As such, increased communication, patience, and additional instruction was key to educating staff members working remotely as the firm adapted its IT to meet the new demands from both attorneys and attorney assistants. The lesson learned was be flexible and help others to adapt to changing situations and environments.

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

Do not be timid. If you have a sense that something does not sound right, or does not make sense, ask for clarification or voice a concern. Everyone is trying to provide the client with the best service and no one is going to hold it against you for asking questions.

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

The firm offices include technology critical to connecting the firm with clients their respective inventors. We work with world-wide clients and foreign associates and the firm's expanding technology base allows us to perform the mission the client expects.

How would you describe your work mindset?

Bloom where planted—embrace your assigned role for a particular case, matter, or project and perform those required duties to the best of your ability to achieve the client’s objectives and goals.

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