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The Global IP Resource

## WOMEN IN IP INTERVIEW: JANE POLITZ BRANDT

09 February 2017 | Natalie Rahhal, New York

**Jane Politz Brandt has made a name for herself trying high-profile cases, particularly in the Eastern District of Texas, where she is co-chair of Thompson & Knight's intellectual property practice group. In our latest Women in IP interview, she talks with Natalie Rahhal about mentorship and secrets to success**

Jane Politz Brandt knows a thing or two about succeeding as a woman in IP law. She has spent her entire career at Thompson & Knight in Dallas, and has risen to prominence, partnership and to co-chairing the firm's intellectual property practice group.

Although she has extensive experience representing clients in IP matters, Brandt cut her teeth as a trial lawyer in all kinds of cases. Seeing these cases through from start to finish helped Brandt to

"develop at a very early point in my career the ability to see the whole picture and how the pieces fit together, and how to keep the pieces moving so they come together."



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## Right place, right time

Brandt's move from general trial practice to IP was a serendipitous one. She found a number of mentors at her firm, but grew to particularly love working with one, whose focus was intellectual property law. Brand liked the work. "I found it stimulating! And not all of it is. If you don't stay stimulated, it's a wretched job," she says.

Her first big IP case happened to be an early and prominent example of the wave of litigation about to hit the Eastern District of Texas. Thompson & Knight, and Brandt, "rode that wave," she says.

"Because we are so close to the Eastern District, we were very busy. The cases began to blossom," she says. As the Thompson & Knight's IP case load grew, the firm decided to create a practice group dedicated to the field, and Brandt became a part of it.

## Start 'em young

Brandt has taken a very active role in shaping her more junior colleagues. "I have spent a lot of my career as a mentor," she says. Brandt has "a pretty high ethical standard, and I think it's important in this field ... to have ethical lawyers. Because we don't really see that across the country."

The firm places an emphasis on getting its younger hires into the court room as early as possible to learn how to handle a case from the start all the way through to trial.

Brandt comes from a legal family, including her father, a former Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals judge. She says that the ethics and values instilled in her from a young age have always informed her practice and been a part of what she passes down to other attorneys.

Thompson & Knight assigns its senior attorneys "advisees". But Brandt says that the work "doesn't stop there. You go to lunch with a younger lawyer ... who just needs to bounce an idea off of somebody – that's still advice! I will come at it from a different perspective, and that's really the whole point."

## What women want

Brandt is adamant that all lawyers should mentor all lawyers. While both female and male lawyers need equal mentoring to practice law well, she acknowledges that they don't approach success and climbing the ladder in the same way.

"Men are very good at asking for what they want; women are a little more hesitant," she says, particularly when it comes to doing "the things that need to be done to become known".



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Brandt advises young attorneys to focus on learning to be an effective IP attorney their first year, but to be sure to develop their reputations and networks by joining bar associations, committees and by speaking at events, and "showing your face". She adds: "In order to be recognised, you have to be known. And in order to be known, you have to be visible."

Brandt says that though more and more women are joining the field, IP law is still, at least traditionally, a male-dominated field. "When I cast my votes do women come to mind? Absolutely! But more men come to mind than women, because you know more men in the field that have established themselves than women," she says.

That can change, though, if women speak more, and are "visible in cases more often, not just in the background, not just in support roles," but in the forefront, she says.

She also emphasises the importance of paying that recognition forward, both within and outside of one's own firm. "The more we succeed, the more we infiltrate and the better we're treated by the male lawyers," says Brandt. She's never been one to be pushed around – "I had seven brothers, I had practice from a very young age defending myself, so it's not easy to bully me!"

But she recognises that women can find it tough, especially in competitive professional environments. "Some people need to learn [to stand up for themselves] and you have to help them with that spine, and we have to support each other," Brandt says.

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