

Do Female Managing Partners Have an Advantage Over Male Counterparts?

Posted by [Martha Newman, J.D., PCC, TopLawyerCoach, LLC](#) • August 25, 2010 • [Printer-friendly](#)

Gender Plays a Positive Role in the Careers of Women Attorneys



Women managing partners.

Unfortunately, they're pretty scarce among the nation's biggest law firms with only **eight of the 100 largest firms reporting a woman in a position of firm-wide management**. That means only **6% of managing partners are women!**

Still, when you do come across a female managing partner, they're, well, happy.

The road to the top may be a long one for women lawyers, but sexism, they say, is never a hurdle. In fact, many **female managing partners say their gender has actually helped them!**

Top Lawyer Coach, LLC
601 Penn Street
Fort Worth, TX 76102

817/992-6711
newman@toplawyercoach.com



"Women have a natural tendency to multi-task," says Margaret Wenke of [Connor, Weber & Oberlies](#) in Paoli, PA.

And, Wenke tells the [Legal Intelligencer](#) that many of the outside professionals she works with are also women.

"Many of our clients, which are insurance companies, have **women in power** and they're quite receptive to having a woman managing shareholder," she adds.

The good news is that Wenke's experience is not unique. More people - both inside and outside the firm - are more amenable to having a woman in charge than they are a man.

"It seems to be sort of a breath of fresh air for them, honestly," says Wenke.

Marie Milie Jones shares a similar story.

At 35, Jones became the youngest female ever to manage a Pittsburgh law firm and says that, back then, the majority of the outside vendors she dealt with had male representatives who were sometimes taken aback to find a young woman at the helm of a law firm.

"Oftentimes their reaction -- and perhaps it was just a facial thing -- was one of surprise," says Jones.

But, Jones never felt like being a woman impeded her ability to negotiate. In fact, her gender may have even helped her.

"I have a fairly social personality," she says. "I'm a friendly, big-smile-on-my-face kind of person and my approach in dealing with vendors like banks and copy vendors was to have a pleasant relationship but, when you had to make a tough call, to stick with that decision."

While progress still needs to be made in getting more women lawyers to the top of the ladder, it seems women who are in charge are doing their jobs **free of gender constraints**.

In the end, Jones says it boils down to the attitude of the firm itself.

"I think firm culture makes a difference," she said. "Not every firm is prepared for that, but ours was."

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