

In-House Litigator Spotlight

With this issue of *In-House Litigator*, we are starting a new feature, the “In-House Litigator Spotlight.” The Spotlight will be an interview of an in-house litigation attorney on varying topics, such as controlling litigation costs or legal department management issues. If you would like to provide a spotlight interview, please contact a member of the newsletter editorial board.¹ The interview topics can be instructive, humorous, or anything of interest to the committee membership.

Cathy Lamboley’s Five Keys to Success

By *Haley Maple & Jacqueline Taylor*

Cathy Lamboley, former general counsel of Shell Oil Company (Shell) and current member of the ABA Commission on Women, recently shared with us what she has learned during her legal career.² Perhaps best known for overhauling Shell’s legal department diversity initiatives and evaluation processes for retaining outside counsel, Lamboley’s experiences and professional development provide valuable lessons for women attorneys practicing in-house, as well as those practicing as outside counsel or in government positions. Lamboley has translated her wisdom into a recipe for success for newly graduated and seasoned attorneys alike.

Lamboley began her legal career at Shell, where she created a lasting impact over her nearly three decades of service. Like many female attorneys, Lamboley began her career trying to fit in as “one of the guys” in the male-dominated business of oil. At the beginning of her career, Lamboley focused on generating top-notch work product in an effort to maintain job stability. As Lamboley progressed in her career, she realized that she was losing herself in the process by attempting to blend in.

After taking on a temporary position on the business side of Shell, Lamboley returned to the legal department with a different perspective. Lamboley decided she was not going to simply blend in and let her work speak for itself in an effort to maintain the status quo. Instead, she began to stand up for what she believed to be important for the future of Shell: diversity initiatives.

At that time, Shell was beginning to diversify internally. Nonetheless, Lamboley firmly believed that to obtain the best solutions for Shell, it was imperative for Shell to diversify internally and externally. Lamboley set about achieving that goal.³ Lamboley continues to pass on the lessons she learned and the professional passions she developed at Shell with the following five-part strategy for career success: (1) make a self-assessment; (2) take risks; (3) take credit; (4) take a hand; and (5) take a stand. This plan can help women practicing in various roles within the legal profession.

Make a Self-Assessment

To achieve career success and satisfaction, it is necessary to perform a self-assessment. Know your existing skill set and knowledge base, and evaluate your existing contact list. Then determine what skills and knowledge you want to develop and goals you would like to achieve to define yourself. Identify the relationships you need to help you cultivate those skills and achieve those goals. Using this self-assessment, you will be able to generate an awareness of what is important to you in the cultivation of your career and develop a plan for achieving personal satisfaction in your career.

Take Risks

To advance in your career, you must take risks. You absolutely will not get ahead by only sitting in your office and working hard. Success takes more. You must seek out and take on challenging assignments and take risks in the product you

generate. You are in charge of your own experiences. You must push yourself and seek out those experiences that will help you achieve your goals.

Similarly, you must take risks in the relationships you seek to cultivate; building relationships is key to career success. Extend yourself beyond your comfort zone. Reach out to other people and develop meaningful and lasting relationships.

Take Credit

As Lamboley pointed out, women tend to hesitate to take credit for a job well done. When a goal is achieved or a positive result is obtained for a client, a woman may be likely to say “it was a team effort” rather than take credit for her own role in achieving the goal. Do not be that woman. Do not minimize your achievements. Stand up and take credit. Doing so will get you noticed.

Take a Hand

Lamboley’s recipe for success focuses on a double-sided approach to mentoring. Not only do women with experience need to seek out women with less experience, but also women with less experience need to seek more experienced colleagues. We all must be willing to reach out and take one another’s hands. Senior women and younger women can learn from each other. After all, we have a lot to learn from one another. It is crucial for more senior attorneys to recognize their power and role in advancing, mentoring, and providing opportunities for young attorneys. Likewise, more junior women must recognize the value their more senior colleagues can and will offer and teach them much about the business and practice of law.

Take a Stand

You must take a stand for what you think is right. Going along just to get along will not lead to a successful career. Take a stand for the things about which you are passionate; you will find that passion

leads to success. One would be hard-pressed to find a better example of the positive outcome that flows from taking a stand than that of Lamboley's success after she took a hard stand on diversity—an issue she was passionate about.

In her position as general counsel for Shell, Lamboley took a stand in support of an issue she passionately believed was key to success for the company—diversification.

People may not like or support the issue upon which you choose to take a stand. Nonetheless, you should fight for what you are passionate about. Doing so may lead to positive results for your

client or employer and will allow you to experience the career satisfaction and results you desire. Simply stated, if you believe in something strongly enough, you should fight for that belief. ■

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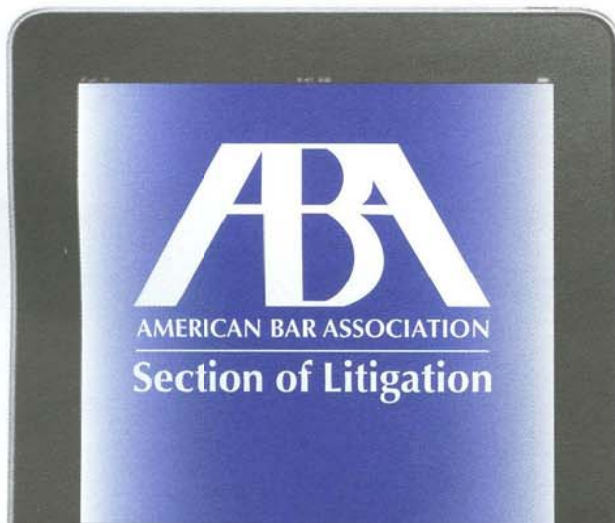
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Endnotes

1. www.abanet.org/litigation/committees/corporate
2. Lamboley is one of the distinguished members of the ABA's Commission on Women, whose alumni include accomplished women such as Hillary Clinton. (Lamboley's biography is available on the Commission on Women's at www.abanet.org/women/commissionmembers.html#lamboley.)
3. Lamboley's extensive overhaul of the legal department within Shell Oil Company, including its processes for evaluating and retaining outside counsel, is discussed more fully in a recent article available on the Woman Advocate Committee's website at www.abanet.org/litigation/committees/womanadvocate.

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