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**2009 survey of the
largest law firms
in Illinois**

**Up-and-coming leaders
look to the future**

Left to right: **Lance A. Zinman**, of Katten Muchin Rosenman; **Christina Martini**, of DLA Piper; and **Jennifer Kenedy**, of Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell.

The next generation of leaders

By Olivia Clarke

In every law firm there are those lawyers who stand out among the pack because they get actively involved in the fabric of the firm.

They volunteer for committees, task forces, and firm-wide initiatives. They agree to mentor young lawyers, act as firm spokespeople, and recruit at job fairs.

They go above and beyond practicing law because they care about what their firm looks like today and will look like in the future. It is these same people who will most likely gain more responsibility in their firms as the years go on.

Chicago Lawyer cast a net out to law firms, lawyers, and bar associations, asking them who they considered to be part of the next generation of law firm leaders. Many lawyers were suggested and we selected six of them as representatives of the coming generation of leadership. The magazine asked them to weigh in about the law firm of the future, and what type of leader will be needed.

These six lawyers come from larger firms, and almost all of them have worked at the same firm their entire careers. They've built not only a strong practice, but also a strong resume of leadership positions. When asked why they get involved, most described a loyalty they have to their firms.

"Who wouldn't want to help shape their firm's future?" said Lance A. Zinman, a Katten Muchin Rosenman partner who has worked there for 11 years. "This is where you spend a lot of your time. It is a no-brainer. It is very rewarding to help your firm in whatever way you can to help it reach its goals. ... I get a lot of pleasure in being involved, quite frankly, and being part of a team. I'm part of a team with my clients. It's just as rewarding to be part of a team with my own firm."

"For me it really makes my career and my life much more enriching and rewarding," said Christina Martini, a DLA Piper partner who has worked there 15 years. "I think these



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Photo by Callie Lipkin

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different roles have really helped me develop a skill set that I wouldn't otherwise have. ... It helps me understand the types of business issues my clients end up having to deal with. It helps me understand the ways in which the business side of my law firm runs."

"I think that the people most actively involved are generally the folks who care about the firm, like the people, and care about how the firm's going to develop," said Michael Wolf, a partner at Jenner & Block, who has worked there six years. "You can complain about the circumstances or you can get involved and make sure the firm is the type of firm you want to get involved in long-term."

"Financial compensation is not why we do it," said Charles S. Hallab, a partner at Baker & McKenzie, who has worked there 11 years. "The reality is, it has to do with my own psychology and my own desire to commit to this place, and to its mission, and to its vision, and what it can be and what it is."

What they look like

As law firms become more corporate in their structure, they will want their leadership to know how to take advantage of that structure, said Brian Uzzi, Richard L. Thomas distinguished chair of leadership at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. He has also taught leadership at Northwestern's law school.

They will also need to understand how to put the pieces of a law firm together, and how to build a strategy that helps the firm remain competitive in the marketplace, Uzzi said.

A successful firm leader, he said, can wear several different hats in different legal areas and speak knowledgeably about how different practice areas work together. They do not necessarily need to be the best specialists in those areas, he said.

"In law firms you need to know how to do law, and you need to know how to lead," Uzzi said. "Lawyers come in knowing a lot about the law and very little about leadership. The smart law schools are all talking about putting in classes about leadership, strategic direction of firms, and how to build relationships better. Believe me, most law schools tell you there is room in the curriculum for this

kind of work."

He speculates that "people who have an MBA/JD are going to become incredibly valuable to these organizations, and they themselves will be in the best position to become leaders of these firms in the future."

Jennifer Kenedy, a Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell partner who has been at the firm 16 years, sees lawyers becoming more like business people because running law firms effectively will benefit clients.

This can mean using technology to streamline certain processes without compromising quality, and outsourcing some legal services, she said.

"We have to be creative and we have to be entrepreneurial in this economic climate to be successful lawyers to our clients," she said. "I do think we need, and I think we are getting, by necessity, leaders who are entrepreneurial and willing to rethink the traditional law firm business model to provide services economically and efficiently. We are seeing leaders become more flexible."

The leaders of the future will exhibit skills above and beyond their ability to generate new client relationships, said Wolf, from Jenner & Block. Wolf, who has an MBA, said having an MBA is not a prerequisite to possessing good leadership skills, but it can provide a more well-rounded background.

"They are going to have to be people with a little bit more business savvy, and who are skilled in law firm management," Wolf said. "It's not a question of whether they are smart lawyers and have developed a number of clients. You really have to have the experience, knowledge, and ability in managing firms, and a desire to do it."

The firm's future leaders will need the traditional qualities that all leaders must possess, but they will also need a high emotional IQ, said Martini, from DLA Piper.

"You can be a great lawyer, but you may not have a great emotional IQ. You really have to be empathetic and see clients as people," Martini said. "I think also, as part of that, you need to have understanding of the value of the relationship. You have to be effective at establishing them and taking them to the next

level."

They also need to be visionaries and sometimes risk-takers, she said.

"They are going to have to be willing to be the first in doing things," she said. "I think if you want to be innovative, and you really want to make a difference you have to be willing to take risks — being first to do something, not just something small, but something significant; and willing to be different, willing to think outside the box, willing to challenge the norm."

Amy Manning, a McGuireWoods partner who has worked at the firm for 16 years, has a framed piece of paper next to her computer — a class assignment her then-7-year-old son completed. Her son's assignment: "If you could vote for a leader for the suburbs what kind of person would you vote for?"

He wrote: "I would vote for my mom. I would vote for her because she is nice, responsible, trustworthy and fair."

"I have to live up to that every single day," she said. "I framed it and put it next to my computer. Those are sort of the price-of-admission types of qualities for a leader."

Future firm leaders should possess generosity — a characteristic not always mentioned, Manning said. Richard Greenberg, the past Chicago office managing partner, and Craig Culbertson, the current Chicago office managing partner, both taught her the importance of recognizing people's contributions.

"Leaders in law firms have to be almost overly generous to set the right tone," Manning said. "You think about something like cross-selling in law firms, and the easiest clients to get business from are the clients that know you. Cross-selling only happens if there's trust. Trust comes from generosity."

Firm leaders today and in the future must possess very intuitive people skills, she said. They need to negotiate the different personalities that exist within a law firm.

"Leaders have to be open and able to encourage innovation," Manning said. "If you are encouraging innovation, people are more likely to come forward with an idea of how to do something. Innovation is going to be very, very important in the next 20 years as the

Lance A. Zinman — *Katten Muchin Rosenman*



Age: 36

Education: Michigan State University (1995); Northwestern University School of Law (1998).

Career: Partner at Katten Muchin Rosenman. He's been at the firm for 11 years.

Leadership: A member of the recruiting committee; head of the Chicago marketing committee for financial services; helps train associates in his group; heads the hedge fund practice in Chicago; and on the firm-wide business development committee.

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structure of law firms changes substantially.”

Future firm leaders will need to be skilled attorneys who understand what clients want, and what it means to deliver value, said Zinman, from Katten.

“The law firm is still a business, and the best way, I think, to lead a business is to meet clients’ needs,” Zinman said. “That tends to lead to more clients. You have to figure out a way to continue to deliver that.

“That’s not to say that firms in the past were put on cruise control. I think we are entering into a new world of the legal profession. Clients, rather than looking and saying, ‘I need a lawyer to do this deal,’ they are saying, ‘Let’s pick a firm that understands our business and develops value.’”

“The leader of the future will have more pressure, more competing pressures, to spend a bunch of time understanding the client’s business and doing it in a manner that is efficient,” Zinman said.

Hallab, from Baker & McKenzie, said future firm leaders need credibility. No longer can a firm simply appoint people to be leaders and expect people to follow them.

Increasing globalization means leaders will need credibility across practice areas, offices, and geographic boundaries. Those in the firm need to believe in their leader’s proven ability to cross-sell, grow the business, and build strategy beyond the walls of their office.

“Every year we work more closely, more integrated, and more cooperatively with our colleagues and counterparts,” Hallab said. “As that continues to occur — and I don’t see that that’s going to change any time soon — I think you are looking for leaders that have the ability to cross those practice lines, and geographic lines, and have the credibility and cachet in Hong Kong as well as Chicago.”

The business

Law firms have operated in a way that differs greatly from many businesses, Hallab said. The recent market conditions, and changing economy have given firms a wake-up call.

“Here and elsewhere there is more of a focus on the law firm as a business and on the business of being a law firm,” he said. “In some

ways law firms provide an environment where sometimes the real moneymakers subsidize, in some cases, the ones who don’t make or bring in money; theoretically, it is supposed to play out in the end. This economy and recent events and other factors and forces will put pressure within. ... Higher performers will be less tolerant of subsidizing lower performers going forward.”

Clients ask firms more and more for “one-stop shopping,” he said. They look for single points of accountability, and firms with legal capabilities across geographies and areas of expertise.

“Our management has done a wonderful job in recent years of focusing on the business of the law firm, but not to the detriment of the culture and goodwill and all the things you look for in a business,” Hallab said.

The law firms of tomorrow will be more client-focused, and will need to do a better job identifying and developing practice areas that specifically support clients’ needs, said Wolf, from Jenner & Block. Firms will use client relationship managers who pair the right lawyer with the client depending on his or her legal needs.

“The day of the generalist is probably waning, and you will find that firms are going to be a little bit more methodological about building practices,” Wolf said. “...They are going to evaluate those practices and those talents more like the corporate world evaluates potential investments today.

“You would attempt to identify what type of return you are going to get on a practice. Our world has become increasingly competitive and I think law firms are being managed more and more like a corporation and some of its practices will evolve along those lines.”

Law firms will need to identify those aspects of the partnership they want to preserve, Wolf said. Those firms that will succeed are the ones that will evolve, while still maintaining some of the aspects that people cherish, he said.

Kenedy, from Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell, said she sees clients relying less on a firm name and more on the value provided. Clients want economical and efficient service.

“There is a comfort level in the way things used to be done. As a younger partner I disagree with keeping things the way they were — as comforting as it might have been,” she said. “Historically, you worked hard and you were elevated into partnership and it was a tenured position that you kept until you retired. I think that all businesses have to be adaptive and willing to change to survive.”

She said the newspaper and auto industries have shown what can happen when businesses do not change as the world changes. Lawyers and law firms must adapt and consider what has worked and what hasn’t worked in order to remain successful, she said.

“We have to treat it as a business because it is a business,” Kenedy said. “I really think that in the future we have to have law firms where one size doesn’t fit all.

“As law firms we can have a collegial environment and still not lose sight of the bottom line,” she said. “They are not mutually exclusive. What we cannot do is be so focused on not losing this sense of collegiality that it is at the expense of making the tough decisions we need to make as businesses to succeed in a rapidly changing legal market.”

Law firms must figure out how to give clients real advice, said Zinman, from Katten. For example, throughout the world large financial institutions are failing, and the issues surrounding them are very complex. Many clients are asking their lawyers if their assets are safe with their various brokers and counterparties.

“That legal advice may be to give an answer to part of the question, give real advice where clear answers are, and also identify where it is gray,” he said. “Equip them to deal with that question. I think in order to do that our firm really has spent a lot of time and resources understanding the business. ... I don’t think it is good enough anymore to write a treatise. It is not going to be helpful for the clients who are really dealing with the real world.”

Law firms will need to get new lawyers highly skilled at a quicker pace, Zinman said. This may mean intensely training them to understand the various rules, regulations, business complexities, and goals their clients

deal with daily, he said. This would involve formal training, as well as the partners being even more sensitive to the fact that they must continuously train their people, Zinman said.

“I think there were some firms in the past that were expanding into jurisdictions without a clear strategy of why or how,” Zinman said. “Some firms thought bigger was better. The jury is still out on the model. ... Not every firm is able to go global, but, increasingly, firms are going to have to. They will have to figure out the best model to do so.”

This is a moment of dynamic change in law firms because of the economic situation, said Manning, from McGuireWoods. Law firms will see alternative categories of people in firms, instead of the traditional associates and partners, she said. And billing arrangements will also be more creative.

“I think you will see more diversity,” she said. “A number of studies show that a diverse team gets to the best solutions. ... Technology is going to continue to have a huge impact on law firms. Already you’ve seen how this changes how you interact with clients, ... although you can never underestimate the importance of personal interaction. I think the mistake some people make is relying too heavily on technology. You learn so much from personal contact.”

Clients want advisors — not just lawyers, said Martini, from DLA Piper. The law firm of tomorrow must have self-awareness and understand its place in the marketplace.

“If you don’t have that self-awareness, you can’t be strategic about making yourself known,” she said. “I don’t think that the law firm of the future can be everything to everybody. I think because of the shift in the consciousness of the clients, law firms are going to have to be very nimble and be very forward-thinking and essentially preempt

what clients request of them, often in a very short amount of time.”

The next step

Chicago Lawyer asked these lawyers where they see themselves in the firm of the future.

“My goal is to continue to make a positive difference. This is truly who I am,” Martini said. “Also, helping other people at my firm so I can bring others along as well.

“I feel very grateful that there haven’t been really any barriers as a result of my being a woman. I feel an obligation to help other women along by recruiting them, helping them get promoted. I feel a responsibility to both women and minorities to be a change agent.”

Kenedy, from Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell, said she’s been fortunate that she’s had wonderful female role models, including her firm’s leader, Jerry Clements.

“We have a terrific example of a woman succeeding not because she’s a woman but because she’s an excellent lawyer,” Kenedy said. “Part of the challenge is keeping and maintaining and promoting your talented lawyers, including women, so you can draw from that talent. ...

“I think I’d like to be viewed as a contributing and productive partner who contributes as much to her firm as she does to her clients. What role that ultimately takes really remains to be seen. I just hope I’m contributing to the success of our business, in addition to my own legal service to my clients. I think it’s important to do both.”

Manning, from McGuireWoods, said she plans to continue to build a substantial book of business, and to take on any new leadership opportunities presented to her. She said she enjoys learning about leadership, management, and economic issues because it allows her to be both a lawyer and a businessperson.

“When you are a leader in a law firm you have the opportunity to positively impact so many people and so many things and that’s very attractive to me,” she said. “From a recruiting standpoint I want to recruit the best and the brightest. From a diversity standpoint I want us to have the best diverse candidates, and I hope I can help us move in that direction. However the firm thinks I can be the most helpful, that’s what I want to do.”

Zinman, from Katten, said he really enjoys being an advocate for his clients, and feels privileged that they look to him to protect their interests.

He likes helping them navigate the maze of demands and assisting them in the reaching of their goals.

“I’d love to be in a leadership position with the firm,” he said. “I’d love to have a practice where I continue to be in a position where I’m looked at as adding value to clients. I get great satisfaction when clients say, ‘We use you because you understand the business and you understand our needs and goals.’ That’s very rewarding.”

Choosing to become a law firm leader comes with its sacrifices, said Hallab, from Baker & McKenzie.

While he would like to help lead the firm, right now he’s focused on his clients and his practice.

“I’m focused more on my practices, my clients, my business, than I am on trying to pursue a career in management,” he said. “It just happens that I am a hiring partner and I’m heavily involved in regional and global strategy.

“If [a leadership] opportunity presents itself someday, I have to think long and hard,” Hallab said. “It means you have to give up, to a meaningful degree, your practice, and that’s challenging.” ■