



**LATHAM &
WATKINS** LLP



Gracefully tooting your own horn to partnership

The co-chairs of Latham & Watkins' Chicago litigation and trial department, Terra Reynolds and Eric R. Swibel, talk about their route to practice management, law firm culture, and some best practice advice on making partnership

To give some background, please give us an overview of your career trajectories to this point?

Terra Reynolds: I started out in government and served for more than a decade as an assistant US attorney in the Northern District of Illinois, eventually becoming deputy chief. In that role, I tried more than a dozen federal criminal cases and led numerous complex investigations and I've briefed and argued matters before the US Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.



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Before that, I clerked for Judge Marvin Aspen in the US District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. I recently became an adjunct professor of trial advocacy at my alma mater, Northwestern University School of Law. I joined Latham in July 2017, and am a member of our Women Enriching Business (WEB) committee, which helps create opportunities unique to women lawyers and to current and prospective women clients.

Eric R. Swibel: I’m a Latham lifer, though before I officially joined the firm, I clerked for Judge William C. O’Kelley in the US District Court for the Northern District of Georgia. I was promoted to partner in 2017 and beyond my role as Chicago litigation co-chair with Terra, I’m also part of the ethics committee and the legal professional and paralegal committee at Latham.

What are the areas of litigation you focus on?

TR: I’m a former federal prosecutor and in my white collar practice at Latham, I represent clients in white collar criminal defence, internal and government investigations, and complex litigation matters, particularly within the healthcare and life sciences industry. My clients include market-leading domestic healthcare companies, multinational pharmaceutical and medical device companies, and individual executives.

ES: I’m a securities and white collar defence litigator focusing on government investigations, shareholder litigation, and internal investigations. My clients have included public and private issuers, broker-dealers, investment advisers, private equity firms, hedge fund advisers, and officers and

directors. I've also written and spoken to client and industry groups on developments in SEC whistleblower law.

What does being an office department chair at a firm like Latham & Watkins involve?

Both: I think for each person, and for each office, it is different based on priorities, preferences, and office culture. For us, we're focused on mapping our vision of the future of our litigation practice in Chicago, and then tapping the resources around the firm to make that vision a reality. It's given us an extra avenue to dialogue with our colleagues and discover that collective view.

One thing Latham does particularly well is identify the best lawyers for each matter, regardless of home office. We get to play a key part in that process by working closely with

colleagues in Chicago and our counterparts in other offices to ensure our clients have the benefit of our deep expertise. That's one of the great, unique things about Latham – the collaboration and coordination across hallways, across practices, across oceans. Everyone is open and willing to roll their sleeves up to help make projects happen, no matter how complex.

Do you anticipate your day-to-day will change as a result of your new responsibilities?

Both: Again, taking on the chair role creates an extra channel and more opportunities to hear directly from colleagues at all levels around the office and the firm globally about the factors driving their practices, how things are changing, how client demands are evolving, and how we can tap into and expand Latham's capabilities to ensure



we remain an innovative firm at the top of our game.

If you look back 15 years, is this something you would have predicted for yourself at this point in your career?

ES: 15 years ago, I was a server at Shaw's Crab House in Chicago. I loved my job, and picked up a bunch of skills I use as a lawyer – understanding the basics of client service, multitasking, and keeping an even-keel in a fast-paced and sometimes stressful environment. I was about to start law school, and I hoped I'd have a rewarding career, but I can't claim to have predicted that it would have unfolded exactly how it did. For better or worse, from my first day at Latham, I took a day-by-day approach. I prioritised opportunities to work with good people, and tried not to overthink the rest, and that's the advice I give to junior lawyers.

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TR: 15 years ago, I was a federal prosecutor in Chicago focused on investigating and prosecuting cases. I had a rewarding and fulfilling career, working collaboratively with my colleagues on complex and meaningful matters. While I could not have predicted it at the time, I am thrilled to be at Latham working collaboratively with an equally wonderful group of colleagues on complex and meaningful matters, and serving the litigation department in a leadership role.

It's a highly competitive environment you're in - at a top US law firm - what are the compromises you have to make in terms of work-life balance?

Both: It's not necessarily just about law firm life, more so than it is being a busy professional in general. Latham is fantastic about allowing individuals to carve out the work-life balance that works for them personally. Yes, our first responsibility is to our clients, but our clients and Latham understand that we're people with families. It's great to have the space to figure out what works for us on an individual level, and to feel 100% supported. Everybody navigates it differently, and having the flexibility to do that is hugely helpful given how busy our matters can be.

What advice would you give to associates looking to make partner?

Both: Trust yourself and know when to ask questions. Of course, there's a tension here, but it's critical to trust your judgement and your ability to make valuable contributions. At the same time, be comfortable asking questions, and recognise what you still have to learn.

As with most careers, the path to success is about seizing opportunities and pursuing what you're passionate about. If you want to take depositions, make it known to partners on your cases, and in

your practice, and offer to help, often.

Get involved. Take part in, and volunteer for, committee activities and pro bono work. Show up to meetings – for the practices you're interested in and even those adjacent to yours – you never know what you might discover! Ditto for local Bar associations and activities.

Be visible. Use the 'extracurriculars' to get on people's radars. Pursue and take on speaking engagements, write client alerts and publish byline articles, all to start to build your brand in the market. And importantly, make sure you leverage that work and your case successes internally so your partnership can see all the great work you're doing to create business prospects. It's all about (gracefully) tooting your own horn. ●