

How I Made Practice Group Chairman: 'Running a Department Is Similar to Running Deals,' Says Richard Sweet of Greenberg Glusker Fields Claman & Machtinger

"While it is always nice to settle into your own management style, you can learn a lot from those that have come before you."

By Tasha Norman

Richard J. Sweet, 46, Greenberg Glusker Fields Claman & Machtinger, Los Angeles.

Job title: Chairman, corporate, finance and securities department.

Practice area: Corporate/Mergers and Acquisitions.

Law school and year of graduation: Berkeley School of Law, 2004.

Were you an attorney at another firm before you joined your present firm? I began my legal career as an associate in the corporate department for Jeffer Mangels Butler & Mitchell. After leaving JMBM in 2009, I joined Rutter Hobbs & Davidoff and a large group from that firm joined Greenberg Glusker approximately 10 years ago.

What year were you promoted to practice group chairman? I was

promoted to practice group chairman in 2018. At that point, I had been a partner at the firm for three years.

What do you think was the deciding point for the firm to promote you to practice group chairman? There are a lot of factors that go into choosing a practice group chairman. Of course, it helps to be respected for your work, the transactions you have closed, and having the right personality traits, but those are better viewed as prerequisites for the job rather than deciding factors. I believe the deciding factor in my appointment was management's confidence in my ability to connect with others in my department. Connecting with staff and attorneys is one of the values my firm places a premium on—work



Richard J. Sweet

courtesy photo

culture. Achieving and maintaining a collaborative and healthy work environment can be extremely challenging in our industry given the nature of our work. Connecting with people is a necessary component of managing a department that prioritizes culture.

"Having a Hispanic heritage and living in one of the most diverse communities in the world, I recognize the importance of having

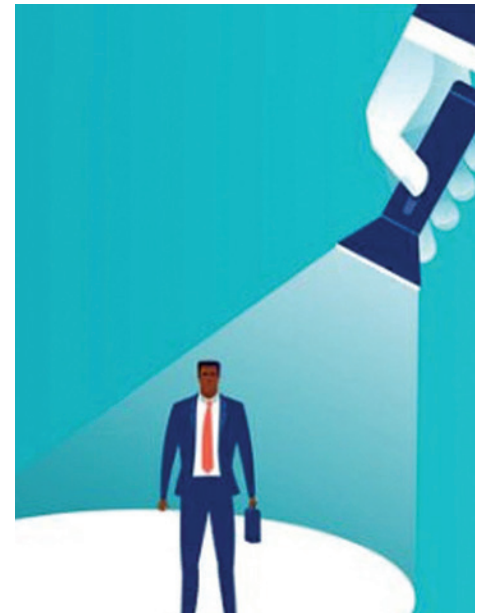
diverse voices in our firm. This is why I am member of our firm's diversity committee. My hope is that by having more diverse perspectives and voices at Greenberg Glusker, we will foster more inclusiveness and as a result, we will respond to the needs of our diverse clientele."

In your role as practice group chairman has your day-to-day routine changed much? Perhaps the biggest surprise I experienced was that running a department is very similar to running M&A deals. As an attorney that focuses on M&A, I have plenty of experience in managing different personalities, situations and legal issues. Leading a department is similar, except that instead of working toward a closing by allocating risks and legal issues, I am

focusing on allocating resources and managing expectations to enable my department to provide top-notch legal services to our clients.

What's the key to successful business development in your opinion? For me, the key to successful business development is a mix of excellent client service and getting out in the community to engage with the others in your industry. While I have been successful at developing business from professional networking organizations, most of my clients result from referrals from other clients.

What's the best piece of advice you could give a partner who wants to make it to firm leadership? The best piece of advice I would give to a partner wanting to take on such a role would be to learn



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from others by finding mentors within and outside of your firm. I am fortunate in that my firm has been around since the '50s and many of my colleagues have been involved with our firm's management at various levels. While it is always nice to settle into your own management style, you can learn a lot from those that have come before you.