

PROFILE: Maureen Bogue

By Monica L. Coughlin

If you are seeking a comprehensive comparison of the practice of law at a large law firm, at a small law firm, as in-house counsel at a large corporation, and as a solo-practitioner, Maureen Bogue is a one-stop resource. She has fit all of these practices into her continually evolving career, and picked up valuable insight along the way. Throughout all of these transitions, she reflects, "I never wanted to leave the law, I just wanted to find the best fit possible."

Ms. Bogue's first job in law after graduating from Cornell Law School was driven primarily by her (former) aversion to cities: "I grew up on a farm in upstate New York, and was afraid to live in a city." As a result, she took a job with a small firm in Manchester, New Hampshire. There she met a lifelong mentor and friend, a female partner, who was also the head of the firm's Labor and Employment group. She introduced Ms. Bogue to employment law, which she continues to practice exclusively to this day.

After some time in Manchester, Ms. Bogue realized that in order to advance her career, she would need to "venture into a city," so she moved to Boston and joined a larger, regional firm. After several years in Boston, Ms. Bogue moved to California to take a position with Seyfarth Shaw, where she spent the most significant part of her law firm career, defending mostly single-plaintiff discrimination claims, and providing businesses with advice and counsel on employment matters.

After making partner at Seyfarth Shaw in 2004, Ms. Bogue received a call from a recruiter looking to hire for an in-house employment position at Bechtel Corporation. She was intrigued by the company, an international engineering firm that presented many complex issues. She also was drawn to the possibility of expanding her skill set, particularly her business experience, which she felt was lacking in her litigation practice: "I didn't understand how businesses functioned. I felt that was something I was unable to bring to the table when I sat down with my clients."

At Bechtel, Ms. Bogue served as Senior Counsel and handled employment and benefits litigation, and counseling worldwide. This included managing litigation, as well as providing advice and training to Human Resources and other departments within the company. The nature of her work differed vastly from her law firm

practice: "My law firm practice involved time-intensive projects for large cases. As an in-house attorney, I was juggling a different question every ten minutes. There were so many issues touching people in different divisions and countries."

During her time at Bechtel, Ms. Bogue found most satisfaction in the "relationship development" aspect of her role: "Within six months, I developed relationships to the point where internal clients would seek out my advice before taking action. They would pull me in early on, to develop effective solutions to employment issues, and began to see me as their business partner."

Her work in-house gave Ms. Bogue some valuable insight into her litigation practice. She gained a better understanding of the corporate politics through which her clients must navigate. She also gained an understanding of the personal elements of a lawsuit—even when the allegations are lodged against a corporation: "When Bechtel was named in a lawsuit, and I heard someone make an inaccurate statement that reflected poorly on how the company treated its employees, I took the comment personally."

After four years at Bechtel, Ms. Bogue began to miss her litigation practice. While at Bechtel, she developed several relationships with employment attorneys from Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker, and decided to join their San Francisco office, where she was able to work with several "extraordinary attorneys." While she loved her practice, she began to face a new concern—her billing rate. Although she enjoyed the work and her colleagues, she knew that she would not be able to develop the practice that was expected of her. At this point she decided to try yet another role: solo-practitioner.

Ms. Bogue lowered her rate to where she felt comfortable marketing herself, joined professional groups, and began networking her services. She also had the time to take tennis lessons and travel. Ultimately, however, Ms. Bogue found that practicing on her own was a lonely endeavor. Although she did not mind the administrative aspects of running her own office, she did not enjoy the isolation of practicing law as a solo-practitioner: "I increased my social networks, but I was lonely in my work. I had a downtown office and engaged in regular marketing activities, but there was no one down the hall with whom I could share a success, or

from whom I could seek advice." In addition, Ms. Bogue came to realize that "as a sole practitioner, I could not attract the clients I wanted." With a small office and no partners, she realized that she did not present as someone who would be able to take a case to trial.

In the current chapter of Ms. Bogue's career, she has joined Miller Law Group, a women-owned law firm based in San Francisco. Miller Law Group represents companies in all aspects of California employment law and related litigation. She has joined several former colleagues and believes that this firm may present a combination of the various elements she enjoyed at each of her previous positions. She has already been involved in several interesting cases, and looks forward to working as part of a team and developing business under a reasonable rate structure.

When asked about her greatest challenge in practicing employment law, she responded: "You need to remember that there's a person with a family who currently does not have any income or health insurance. This does not mean that you change your legal position; it just means that when you walk into that room, you

remember to be respectful. Although they may be in that situation because of their own actions, you still need to remember their view of the situation. That can be emotionally draining at times." As for her greatest satisfaction, Ms. Bogue finds it in the "combination of winning and working on a team to get that win."

In discussing the challenge of work-life balance, Ms. Bogue admits that except for her year as a solo practitioner, "the practice of law for me has always been all-encompassing." In reflecting on the occasional lack of balance in her life, Ms. Bogue does not place blame: "to the extent that I have not achieved work-life balance in the past, I believe I need to take responsibility for that." Still, she believes that it can be achieved: "The first time I felt balance was when I had my own practice. So now I'm trying to see if I can take some of those lessons and apply them to a reasonable law firm environment."

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