

Rising Star: Morrison & Foerster's Lauren C. Bellerjeau

Law360, New York (July 20, 2017, 3:44 PM EDT) - Morrison & Foerster LLP's youngest partner, Lauren Bellerjeau, has helped push the firm's mergers and acquisitions practice into the world of real estate investment trust transactions and has taken the lead on major deals including the sale of GE's commercial real estate unit to Blackstone, earning her a spot among attorneys under 40 being honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

HER MOST CHALLENGING DEAL:

While Bellerjeau's career has involved working on a number of challenging transactions, high up on the list is her representation of General Electric Co. in the \$23 billion sale of its commercial real estate business to affiliates of Blackstone Group in 2015.

Bellerjeau worked at Hogan Lovells at the time and had made partner in January of that year, making this one of the first times she took a lead role in a major transaction. To complicate matters, Bellerjeau was given only two weeks to execute the deal, meaning she had to complete all of the due diligence, negotiations and other complex tasks in a very short time span.

"Obviously that meant working around the clock," Bellerjeau said. "I spent eight days live in New York negotiating, and during that time I could count on my fingers the number of hours of sleep I had."

Bellerjeau expressed the importance of completing the deal quickly to avoid market leaks and because it turned out to be the first of a number of strategic property sales by GE.

RISING ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ STAR



**Lauren C.
Bellerjeau**
Morrison & Foerster

Age: 34

Home base: Washington, D.C.

Position: Partner

Law school: Indiana University's Robert H. McKinney School of Law

First job after law school: Associate at [Pepper Hamilton LLP](#)

“There were a lot of people working to get that done in a very condensed time frame,” Bellerjeau said. “From that perspective, it was very challenging but also very satisfying when we made it happen.”

PROUDEST MOMENT AS AN ATTORNEY:

Bellerjeau’s proudest moment took place after her arrival at Morrison & Foerster from Hogan Lovells, when she led real estate investment trust Farmland Partners Inc. in its acquisition of American Farmland Co.

Bellerjeau said she came to the firm to round out its M&A practice with her REIT transactional experience, as the firm had the technical expertise of more established firms but not the historic REIT practice.

“It was a really interesting and compelling opportunity for me to be on the front lines, going out to try and drum up the work on the REIT side with the MoFo team,” she said.

The Farmland Partners deal was a strategic success for her client as it established the largest farmland REIT in the U.S., and Bellerjeau said the deal showed she accomplished what she set out to do by joining Morrison & Foerster.

“I felt this was not the culmination, but the beginning of making that come to fruition and getting work that I’m not sure the M&A group at MoFo would have gotten without me coming onboard,” Bellerjeau said.

WHY THE FOCUS ON M&A:

Bellerjeau did not always plan on becoming an M&A lawyer, but after law school, she knew she did not want to become a litigator. She felt drawn to the transactional side of the business, and after being placed in the corporate group at Pepper Hamilton LLP, she developed a knack for M&A work, as well as a home in that area of the law.

“I felt a sense of personal satisfaction in working with a broad team as an M&A lawyer and getting a business deal done and being very collaborative for a client,” Bellerjeau said. “I felt that you could be much more creative in finding solutions for them.”

ADVICE TO YOUNG ATTORNEYS:

Learn to think critically and don’t be complacent, because if something doesn’t sound right, you should not be afraid to ask questions, Bellerjeau said.

“Older and more experienced doesn’t necessarily mean smarter, and if you can add something, think you can add something, or believe that just asking a question might cause the group to think in a different way, you should speak up and have your voice heard on that topic,” she said.

— *As told to Matthew Guarnaccia*

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2017 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,200 submissions. This interview has been edited and condensed.

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