

MVP: Weil Gotshal's Allison Liff

By Dean Seal

Law360 (November 19, 2019, 4:35 PM EST) -- Over the past year, Allison Liff of Weil Gotshal & Manges LLP advised Syncreon Group Holdings BV on a global financing and groundbreaking balance sheet restructuring, helped Goldman Sachs' merchant banking division finance its acquisition of Restaurant Technologies Inc., and assisted Sovos Brands in financing its merger with Noosa Yoghurt LLC, landing her a spot as one of Law360's 2019 Banking MVPs.

HER BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN THE PAST YEAR:

The Syncreon deal, which involved about \$1.1 billion of funded debt, included a structured receivables financing and multiple amendments to raise additional debt and provide operational liquidity. Liff said the financing and restructuring completed this fall was among the most complicated cases she's advised on in her nearly 20-year career, but also among the most rewarding.

"That was truly an amazing opportunity to work for quite a long time with one client as a whole firm and bring multiple practice areas together," Liff said. "Not just banking and finance, but also our restructuring practice, our corporate M&A practice and the like, all working seamlessly as one firm to get amazing results for a global client."

WHY SHE'S A BANKING ATTORNEY:

Liff says she came into her role as a banking and finance attorney through "pure happenstance." The Harvard Law School graduate had originally envisioned herself as a false advertising and media law wonk, but during her first summer associate program she realized the path to being a great client adviser in that field was heavily oriented toward litigation.

"It took me about three days to realize that I'm not well-suited for litigation — it's not for me," Liff said.

She dabbled in some finance work at her first post-grad law firm before heading to Weil the following summer, where her corporate rotation had her working in banking and finance matters that ignited her interest in the space.



"I liked it from minute one, and I've done leveraged finance since then for my entire career," Liff said.

WHAT KEEPS HER MOTIVATED:

A self-described "deal junkie," Liff says she is motivated by the relationship-building aspect of the banking and finance practice, as well as the complexities of finding a creative solution for each transaction she oversees.

"I just really enjoy the pace of the deals," Liff said. "I enjoy rolling up my sleeves and working with our clients to structure the deal, document it, and help our clients realize their strategic objectives."

Those objectives vary from deal to deal, she said, so while the underlying product may be the same type of debt agreement, what it needs to be structured around and how it's accomplished is often highly specific and unique.

HER ADVICE FOR JUNIOR ATTORNEYS:

Liff's advice to younger attorneys is three-pronged: Find your passion, find a mentor and take initiative.

"Life is way too short to be unhappy in your day job, and if you aren't passionate about what you're doing, take some time to find something that you love," she said.

Taking ownership of your career and seeking out new challenges early on can pay hefty dividends, Liff said, as senior attorneys tend to reward those self-starters with more opportunities and a wider breadth of experience. And while most firms have their own mentorship programs, Liff said the best mentor-mentee relationships she's ever had developed organically.

"Find someone that's senior to you, who you trust and respect on not just a professional level, but a personal level as well, and who you aspire to be like when you get more senior," Liff said. "I think those relationships have been invaluable to me as I've built my career over the years."

— As told to Dean Seal

Law360's MVPs are attorneys who have distinguished themselves from their peers over the past year through high-stakes litigation, record-breaking deals and complex global matters. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2019 MVP winners after reviewing nearly 900 submissions.