

Banking

Five minutes with Justin Lee, Weil

By Karry Lai June 23 2025



The New York-based lawyer explains why a successful finance lawyer needs to understand the big picture and how he pushes himself and others to their fullest potential

Welcome to the latest instalment of IFLR's 'Five minutes with' series, where we learn more about lawyers on a personal as well as a professional level. This time we have Justin Lee, partner at [Weil](#) in New York.

Someone asks you at a party what you do for a living. What do you say?

I am co-head of the banking and finance group at Weil where I focus my practice on all types of indebtedness across the capital structure. I also head up the firm's global liability management and strategic capital solutions initiative, which is a multi-disciplinary effort to provide coordinated, creative advice and implementation for our clients.

Talk us through a typical working day.

I usually wake up early to hit the gym and then have coffee and breakfast with family. One of the exciting things about being a partner at Weil is that no two days are alike, but it's usually fair to say that my day will include some combination of board and client meetings, negotiations, internal discussions and business development as well as keeping up on the market and recent developments. I love working with the diverse crew of attorneys here to deliver for our clients across all kinds of challenging situations.

What are you working on at the moment?

I'm working on a few liability management opportunities for various parties, including sponsors, portfolio companies and creditors, as well as some more regular way financings with respect to potential leveraged buyouts. I'm also working with my restructuring colleagues on a few distressed or quasi-distressed scenarios on both the creditor and debtor sides.

What is the most exciting aspect of your role and what is the most stressful?

I get to work on some of the most innovative and interesting transactions in the market and collaborate with amazing attorneys from across the firm and the globe. As with most practices in big law, transaction timelines can be unpredictable and negotiations can be intense. This leads to stressful situations but I try to remember that everyone is just doing their job and trying to get the best deal for their clients under tight timelines and similar pressures.

Tell us the key characteristics that make a successful finance lawyer.

I think you always have to be a bit of a Jack or Jane of all trades and make sure that, first and foremost, you understand the larger picture, your client's objectives, and the key stakeholders in the matter. It's important to be a thoughtful and thorough lawyer, but it's equally important to be commercial, responsive and user-friendly for your clients. Additionally, the community is small so it's important to be a good partner to other attorneys to build relationships and a strong reputation.

What is the most common misconception about being a finance lawyer?

I think that law students and non-finance attorneys may assume that you need some kind of a financial background and a desire to read spreadsheets and create models. We leave that part to the experts such as financial advisers, investment banking colleagues and folks at PE shops. Instead, we look to add value as collaborative and insightful lawyers. As finance attorneys, we have the opportunity to sit in many

different seats across transactions. Our firm is well known for sponsor finance, liability management, lender engagements as well as distressed matters and funds finance. It's quite a vibrant and varied practice so more exciting than one might assume for finance.

What or who inspires you?

I'm inspired by my family – Michael (my husband), Maya (our five-year-old daughter) and Tucker (our eleven-year-old French bulldog) are an outstanding built-in support system.

If you weren't a finance lawyer, what would you be doing?

Actually, I feel like I'd probably just have another seat around the same table – I could see myself as an M&A or restructuring investment attorney if I stayed within the law or at a financial adviser or opportunistic direct lending institution if I venture out of the comforts of the law.

Any advice you would give your younger self?

Don't say "I've never done X before" – this is always the case the first time that something is new, but it's better to look at it as a challenge to level up. I love pushing associates to their full potential by providing them with opportunities to develop at their own pace even if that means that they're doing something that's above their seniority, with appropriate supervision, of course!

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Karry is managing editor of IFLR. She manages the team and is responsible for IFLR's content. She also sits on the editorial judging panels of IFLR's global awards and the Women in Business Law Awards. Before joining the legal media industry, she was project manager at a startup focused on sustainable lifestyle media and events.

