

How I Made Law Firm Leadership: 'Be Willing to Get Involved and Spearhead Other Projects,' Says Justin Lee of Weil, Gotshal & Manges

By ALM Staff

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Justin Lee, 41, Partner at Weil, Gotshal & Manges, New York, New York

Job title: Global head of liability management and strategic capital solutions; co-head of U.S. banking and finance group.

Practice area: Banking and finance

Law school and year of graduation: NYU School of Law, 2009

The following has been edited for style.

How long have you been at the firm?

I was a summer associate in 2008 and joined right out of law school in January 2010.

How long were you a partner at the firm before being promoted to firm leadership?

Six years.

Were you a partner at another firm before joining your present firm? If so, which one? How long were you there and when did you leave?

No.

What year were you promoted to your current position?

Promoted to co-head of U.S. banking and finance group in 2024 and global head of liability



Courtesy photo

Justin D. Lee of Weil, Gotshal & Manges

management and strategic capital solutions in 2025.

Were there any surprises you faced after becoming a leader at the firm?

While Weil has guided the evolution of liability management, formalizing the cross-disciplinary effort has been and continues to be exciting. Our liability management and strategic capital solutions initiative responds to rising client demand as the market is hot in LMEs right now and our clients across the board have an interest in understanding how these

work. It is amazing to work with my colleagues from across the firm and the globe to continue to build out this world-class practice.

My work as co-head of Weil's 120-lawyer U.S. banking and finance practice is particularly interesting because Weil is one of a very select group of firms that have both highly-rated borrower/sponsor and lender/arranger practices. We regularly represent corporate borrowers, private equity sponsors, and financial institutions in crafting original solutions to highly complex financings in major financial centers around the world. Every day brings its own new challenges, but what I've not been surprised by is how seamlessly our partners around the world work together.

What's been the biggest change, day-to-day, in your routine since becoming a leader at the firm?

I think you very quickly realize that you are not just responsible for yourself and your matters and clients, but the trajectory of your group, the development of rising talent and the future of your collective practice. There are certainly a lot more meetings, but also a lot of opportunity to help steer the direction of the Firm.

What do you think was the deciding point for the firm in elevating you to your current position? Was it your performance on a specific case? A personality trait? Making connections with the right people?

I have always thrown myself into everything that I do and have a very collaborative approach especially when working with different practice groups. We have a one-firm approach, and I think that really plays out in

everyone's rolling up their sleeves to be a well-coordinated team where the whole is stronger than the sum of the parts. I think this mentality has helped me to rise through the ranks at Weil, particularly by building my brand not just in the finance practice, but with my other partners and colleagues.

How do you utilize technology to benefit the firm/practice and/or business development?

Weil makes continual investments in legal technology, and integrating ever-evolving technology into our service offering is a key area of strategic focus for the firm, whether it be creating more efficiencies in how we advise clients, tracking market developments and latest trends or enhancing our business development and marketing efforts. In fact, we have even developed some proprietary technologies ourselves. I am excited to see how we are able to leverage various new products to further our mission.

What advice would you give to someone whose goal is to ascend to firm leadership?

Focus on your practice, but be willing to get involved and spearhead other projects. For years, I served as the co-chair of the Summer Program Committee and a partner leader in Weil Pride, Weil's LGBTQ+ affinity group, as well as serving on the hiring committee and the executive committee of the diversity committee. All of these "extracurricular" commitments were and are incredibly important to me as they help to strengthen the firm and enhance our culture. I view each of these opportunities as part of my Weil journey and they have allowed me to collaborate with

partners of various seniority levels across the firm.

Who had the greatest influence in your career that helped propel you to your leadership role?

Dan Dokos, our most recent head of global finance, was a mentor to me from the time that I joined the firm as a summer associate. Dan retired at the end of 2024 after a long and successful career at Weil. Dan's support, mentorship and friendship was essential to my development as a young attorney. He is an outstanding example of a firm citizen who operated at the top of his practice. Kind and thoughtful, Dan knew how to bridge the gap in any negotiation and find common ground with even the most difficult opposing counsel.

Knowing what you know now, if you had a chance to advise or mentor your younger self (at any stage), what advice would you give to yourself and/or what would you do differently?

I think it is always tempting to fall into imposter syndrome thinking and feeling like you don't deserve a seat at the table. It's important to shake that off and know that you have something to add and you earned your spot.

Do you have a prediction on how the legal industry will evolve over the next several years?

The business of law continues to drive changes across firms. The challenge will always be trying to perform at the highest levels of the market, but also to maintain culture and balance.

What is the one behavior or trait that you have seen derail more leaders' careers?

There is always a balance between consensus building and charting a path forward. I think the best leaders are able to hear all perspectives, but then be able to make a decision at the end of the day for the benefit of the group.

Please share with us any firm or industry initiatives that you are working on as well as the impact you hope to achieve.

As mentioned above, our liability management and strategic capital solutions initiative has been extremely well received and I continually find myself working with lawyers in different areas of the firm to meet the needs of companies, sponsors, creditors, and investors managing complex capital structure issues where conventional financing options fall short. Since these deals are pretty bespoke, it gives me an extraordinary opportunity to be creative with my partners and other advisers for the benefit of our joint clients.