

L.A. BUSINESS FIRST

WOMEN OF INFLUENCE

Purvi Patel

Morrison & Foerster LLP

BY MARK MENSHEHA
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Editor's note: This profile spotlights one of the 10 L.A. Business First Women of Influence honorees for 2022. We asked each of the 10 to complete a survey through which we can share with you some of their background, their achievements and their industry insights. Look for additional honoree profiles in the days ahead.

Name: Purvi Patel

Company: Morrison & Foerster LLP

Title: Partner, office managing partner and hiring partner, Los Angeles

Where born: Chicago

Education: University of Chicago (B.A.);
Loyola University Chicago (J.D.)

How would you quickly describe your job and what you do to someone you just met?: I counsel and represent retail, e-commerce and other consumer-oriented businesses in significant advertising, unfair competition, consumer fraud and privacy matters. I like solving problems and I approach my work strategically and practically with business objectives in mind to secure successful outcomes both in and out of the courthouse.

The attributes I look for in a candidate when hiring are: Ownership mentality, detail-oriented, creativity and curiosity with a side of skepticism.

The best advice I've received for career development is: Say "yes" when you're scared. If you wait until you feel "100% ready" to do anything, it's too late.

A tip I've learned that's helped me with networking is: Take notes on the people you meet. I have a pretty good ability to



remember faces, names and details about people's lives, but I still take notes, including how we met and key things we connected on or discussed.

What is the biggest challenge facing your industry and/or company, and how should that challenge be addressed?: Maintaining our firm's unique culture in a hybrid, remote-working environment. I expect this is a challenge across industries and companies. We all need to figure out how to work differently

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and to do so while creating a sense of belonging. Teams function better, and we are better problem solvers, if we are each invested in where we work. Those of us who learned how to team-build working in the office five days a week need to learn some new skills. It's certainly doable; it just requires some creativity and a willingness to think differently.

Do you serve as a mentor for someone? If so, how do you fill that role?: I do. I think mentoring is critical and it is a regular part of my day. I mentor law students; associates I work with as well as others at my firm; lawyers at other firms or who are working in-house at companies; attorneys or aspiring attorneys I meet at events; and even law students or lawyers who cold-call me. We talk about everything from work to life, focusing on what the mentee identifies as the most important issue for advice. Many of these relationships are decades long. I recently had a person I mentored while in law school nearly 20 years ago reach out.

Do you have a mentor yourself? If so, what do you get from that individual?: I've been lucky to have had mentors even before I knew what the word meant. Each mentoring relationship is unique, but the universal thread throughout them all for me has been the gift of knowledge – about opportunities, the way the firm works, risks I should be taking, and everything I don't know that I don't know.

What's the biggest challenge facing women who want to take on leadership roles, and what can be done to address that?: While the legal industry is progressing with respect to women taking on leadership roles, we still need women to really be seen and considered as serious contenders for those opportunities. At my firm, building on our inclusive culture that supports and elevates women is a priority. MoFo recently achieved Mansfield Certification Plus status for 2022, an honor the firm has received every year since the launch of the Mansfield Rule in 2017. Certified Plus status indicates that we have successfully achieved at least 30% women, minority, LGBTQ+ and lawyers with disabilities representation across notable leadership roles.

What mistake do young professionals make, and how would you advise them to avoid it?: Waiting for opportunities to come to them. It's really important to speak up when you want to develop a particular skill, work on a particular matter or sup-

port a particular client. If you don't, you risk no one knowing what your priorities are for growth. You are the No. 1 driver for your career.

Are you working from home, from the office or a mix of both?: A mix of both. I'm typically in the office two days a week.

What time-management strategies or lessons-learned do you use to manage your schedule and meet your obligations?: Build strong teams and empower them to act. As my career has progressed, and I've transitioned from doing the research, investigating and writing to being the person guiding that work, I've learned how to delegate with trust. I'm lucky to have excellent colleagues I can collaborate with and rely on. Without them, it would be impossible to meet my clients' needs.

What charity/foundation/cause do you regularly support or volunteer with?: In addition to my pro bono and DEI work internally at MoFo, I am on the board of Legal Education Access Pipeline. LEAP's mission is to "diversify the legal profession by preparing underrepresented students to become successful law school applicants, lawyers, and agents of social change." It's a pipeline program with programming designed to support these students as they prepare to apply to law school and give them the tools to excel as law students.

What book have you read recently that you'd recommend?: I read all the time, and no book is off limits. I recently read and loved "All My Rage," by Sabaa Tahir, a beautiful and compelling story about identity, grief, forgiveness, and the choices and mistakes that may mark our lives but don't define who we are. Up next is "Ask for More," by Professor Alexandra Carter. I've heard her speak at a number of MoFo events and I always learn something new. A recent nugget: To exude executive presence, ask "What are your thoughts?" not "Does that make sense?" The former comes from a place of command and confidence; the latter only undercuts you.

What's the farthest from Los Angeles you've traveled?: India, where both of my parents were born and where my cultural roots are. My name means "from the East" and it was a reminder for me to know and appreciate how far my parents traveled to give me opportunities they did not have.

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