

A professional portrait of Jeanette L. Dixon, a Black woman with shoulder-length dark hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a vibrant blue blazer over a light green V-neck top. Her hands are clasped in her lap. The background is a softly blurred office setting with a window and a plant.

Jeanette L. Dixon
Managing Partner
Manning Kass

Cover Story

Jeanette L. Dixon

Advancing Legal Frameworks To Shape Corporate Growth

“Jeanette’s advice to someone aspiring to reach a leadership position in the legal industry is to lead with patience and grace, and also to understand that everyone can achieve greatness, and that your purpose is to help them shine.”

The legal industry is integral to maintaining societal order, ensuring that justice prevails in a structured and equitable manner. The application of law shapes economies, businesses, and individual lives. As economies grow and businesses expand globally, mergers and acquisitions (M&A) have become important in cultivating this growth. The legal sector, with its evolving frameworks, plays a significant role in ensuring that these intricate transactions are handled seamlessly. The constant need for legal expertise in mergers, combined with the challenge of steering the regulatory field, has led to the legal industry growing in a way that blends traditional legal practices with modern approaches to corporate governance.

Jeanette L. Dixon, a prominent figure in the legal field, has shaped the industry through a leading approach characterized by resilience and a deep commitment to inclusivity. As a **Managing Partner**, she is recognized for her hands-on leadership, which involves guiding her team

through legal problems and understanding the nuances of personal and professional growth. Jeanette's focus on building understanding and trust among her peers and subordinates has allowed her to overcome challenges and inspire others in the legal community, particularly in areas like mergers and acquisitions, where her expertise continues to drive meaningful outcomes.

Manning Kass has become a leading law firm with a robust reputation for delivering high-quality legal services across 39 practice areas. The firm's New York office, under Jeanette's leadership, has experienced rapid growth, mirroring the success of its Los Angeles counterpart. With a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, the firm continues to expand its influence in the legal industry, setting the benchmark for legal innovation and client success. Manning Kass is well-positioned to lead the future of law, driven by its mission to provide unparalleled legal expertise across its growing range of services.

Let's explore Jeanette's inventive journey of legal leadership:

Building Expertise in Mergers and Acquisitions

Upon graduating from the University at Buffalo School of Law and sitting for the New York State Bar, Jeanette decided to follow her dream of working as a corporate attorney in New York City. At the young age of 25, she packed all her belongings into her 1992 Escort and headed to West Orange, New Jersey, where she lived in her aunt's basement and worked temporary jobs, such as document review for the "Big Law" firms.

After about a month, she landed a temporary position with the legal team at IBM, which was completing a Merger and Acquisition. Upon completion of the assignment, the head of the legal team offered her a permanent position with IBM. The only catch was that she would have to move to Raleigh, North Carolina. While this was not her original plan of working as a New York corporate attorney, it did allow her to work in corporate America. As such, her career journey began in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, at IBM.

She soon realized that while she loved the company and the work, she did not like North Carolina. So, after nine months, she worked to get on the team that allowed her to negotiate a master agreement in place with Lucent Technologies, and she was eventually relocated back to New Jersey. Knowing she did not want to go back to North



Carolina when this agreement terminated with Lucent, she eventually left IBM and joined Telcordia Technologies (the brainchild behind the telephone companies), where she continued to sharpen her contract negotiation skills.

Unexpectedly, after about 18 months of working at Telcordia, AIG contacted her regarding a position within their Underwriting Mergers and Acquisitions Division as the Mergers and Acquisitions Legal Advisor, and she began her 14-year journey at AIG in New York City. Her first position was short-lived because, while she was on maternity leave with her first daughter, she was reorganized from her Legal Advisor position into the role of a Senior Underwriter.

For the next 18 months, she learned how to underwrite Merger and Acquisition policies, but quickly realizing that this was not a fit for her background or aspirations, she interviewed for the Complex Claims Director position within the Financial Lines, Directors, and Officers Claims Division. Soon after, she landed her first role within the

claims world as a Directors and Officers Complex Claims Director.

Jeanette quickly rose as a key player on the team and was assigned high-profile D&O matters, such as Martha Stewart's securities fraud claim. However, after three years in a high-profile and exciting claims position, which required extensive travel, she was now a mother of three young children. Feeling it was time to travel less and focus more on raising her children, she moved to her first management role as a Mainstream Director within the Errors and Omissions side of the Financial Lines Claims Division.

Within one year, she was promoted to Assistant Vice President, and the following year, as she was one of the few senior managers within the Financial Lines Division with both D&O and E&O experience, she was given her first opportunity to grow both a team and department through the creation of the Small Claims Department within the Financial Lines Division.





For the next four years, Jeanette built and grew the Small Claims Department in AIG’s New York office, and again when AIG decided to move the department to Berkeley Heights, New Jersey. Her journey ended with AIG when, after the fourth year, they decided to move the Small Claims Department to Olathe, Kansas.

While considering her next move, which was focused on returning to practice, Jeanette’s name was thrown into the hat to build the New York office of Manning & Kass, Ellrod, Ramirez, Trester, LLP, a firm with which she had built a working relationship and friendship while in her

various roles at AIG. From the moment she met Steve Manning, Dennis Kass, and the remaining equity partners, she knew Manning Kass would be her next home.

Mirroring LA Office Success

Jeanette began her current journey with Manning Kass on June 9, 2014, and she maintains to this date that joining the Manning Kass team has been the best decision of her career. She started the New York office alone as the New York Managing Partner and was joined approximately three months later by her equity partner, Marguerite Jonak.

Together, they built the office from two attorneys – wherein they did everything from secretarial, paralegal, and associate work for the first four years – to a team of 14 (nine attorneys and five staff) by the time Marguerite returned to the San Diego office in November 2023. On June 1, 2024, the New York office acquired a team of 18 (12 attorneys and six paralegals), growing the New York office to a team of 32 in just 10 short years.

Jeanette was elevated to equity status in June 2019 and asked to chair the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and

Belonging Committee by the firm in January 2024. As the New York Managing Partner, her primary role is to lead, build, and grow the New York office to mirror the Los Angeles office in both size and scope, practice areas and people.

Collaborative Leadership Approach

Jeanette’s leadership style has always been to lead by example, rolling up her sleeves alongside her adjusters and now associates and/or partners, and to always demonstrate “Grace Under Pressure.” As she runs the coverage and litigation practices in Manning Kass’ New York office, speaks at numerous conferences and seminars, and manages day-to-day staff and personnel matters, she remains sensitive to her attorney and staff members’ needs to fulfil their professional and personal goals. She strongly believes that leadership means building understanding, including of individuals’ weaknesses and strengths, and trust among team members.

Jeanette’s leadership style is also visionary and transformational. With the goal of creating a positive and engaging work environment, she aims to inspire the members of the New York office by clearly communicating a strong common purpose and direction that each member can believe in. This shared vision motivates attorneys, paralegals, and staff members alike to work hard towards the overall success of the office, while encouraging them to think outside the box and fulfil their fullest potential.

Overcoming Career Challenges

While in corporate America, the biggest challenge Jeanette has faced in her career has been being treated differently or not being given an opportunity simply because she was a Black female. She often had to work for men of the



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majority who lacked knowledge of the space and/or the responsibilities of the position, yet she continued to fight to break through the glass ceiling through perseverance and determination.

Achieving Work-Life Balance

Jeanette works hard, and tries to play harder when possible. She always keeps her family, especially the needs of her children, first, making sure to never miss the important moments in their lives. She makes them aware that, as a single mom following her divorce, her success would pave the road for their ultimate success. It makes her proud when her daughter, who is currently attending law school, says, “I can do this because of my mom.”

Consistent Learning in Law

Jeanette stays updated with the latest trends and developments by attending and speaking at various legal conferences. Success in the legal arena also requires constant education, so she frequently attends continuing legal education (CLEs) and consistently informs herself on the passage of laws by the state and federal legislature, as well as of New York state and federal case law.

Guiding Future Leaders

Jeanette’s advice to someone aspiring to reach a leadership position in the legal industry is to lead with patience and grace, and also to understand that everyone can achieve greatness, and that your purpose is to help them shine.

Vision for the Legal Industry’s Future

When asked about her vision for the future of the legal industry and the role of Manning Kass in it, Jeanette stated that the legal industry is ever-changing and evolving, and she sees Manning Kass as a leader that grows and evolves with it. Ever-vigilant to new opportunities, Jeanette continues to market the firm and the New York office in current and synergistic practice areas, as well as for other regional offices, while practicing law at a very high level. She is instrumental in planning firm participation in numerous industry conferences, maintaining the firm’s relevancy as the legal industry evolves, and she encourages associates and junior partners – the leaders of the future – to participate in events and activities that will highlight their value and progress their careers. TM

