



Who's Who at Hinckley Allen: Stephanie J. Baton

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Stephanie is a practical, business-minded attorney whose unique background enables her to better understand her clients and the impact legal issues have on their businesses. Based in our Providence office, Stephanie's practice is primarily focused on Corporate & Business transactional work, such as mergers, acquisitions, and divestitures.

How did you get involved in or what led you to this area of law?

I've always enjoyed law, but I had a roundabout way of getting to where I am today. I started my career as an analyst on Wall Street working in interest rate swaps and credit derivatives. There was definitely a "sink or swim" mentality in those early years, and I learned a lot about thinking on my feet and solving problems quickly. This experience provided me with a perspective on business that I bring to my work in transactional law every single day.

Although there wasn't exactly an "Aha!" moment, I'd been interested in law since taking law-related courses as an undergraduate and ultimately decided to leave Wall Street for law school back in Rhode Island, where I was raised. I thrive on helping businesses improve and found that my passion lies in transactional law.

What unique skill/perspective/philosophy do you bring to your work?

Not many outside counsel have had the opportunity to be as embedded in business – from the operational level to the highest levels of decision-making – as I have. Prior to joining Hinckley Allen, I was in-house counsel, and worked hands-on with executive level to ground floor teams from finance, sales, engineering, human resources – you name it. This gives me insights into the various needs and interests that each of these stakeholders has in an enterprise. Having a seat at executive-level strategy meetings allowed me to participate in

corporate-level, strategic decision-making.

This holistic view of business, combined with the fact that I've been in the General Counsel's shoes before, helps me understand my clients' perspectives, and ultimately provide better counsel. I am aware of peripheral issues that could impact deal dynamics or that should be considered in the context of a transaction. My experience helps me ask the right questions and better understand the behind-the-scenes forces that impact business decisions.

Given the challenges working in Corporate & Business, what makes it all worth it to you?

I love what I do because I get to help companies realize their goals. Our clients are excited to work with us because mergers, acquisitions, or divestitures really have the power to transform their businesses. I enjoy taking the time to understand my clients' businesses, the driving forces behind their strategies, and how our work together can help them achieve their goals. My favorite part of my work is the close of a deal and the feeling of achievement that comes along with it. Preparing my clients for a successful future through transactions is deeply satisfying.

Who was the biggest influence in your career (mentor/teacher/relative) and why?

It's difficult to choose just one. In each of my roles, I have been fortunate to work alongside many colleagues who I admire. Each of them have different work styles and taught me different lessons. I try to apply the best insights I've learned from each of my career influences in my work. Collectively, their diverse voices, and the examples they set, guide me each day.

I was also fortunate that my colleague, [Joe Kuzneski](#), reached out to me when he joined Hinckley Allen in 2016. We had an opportunity to work together previously, and when he began his new role here, he invited me to meet some of the team. The rest, as they say, is history.

What's the best lesson you've learned about practicing law?

Two valuable lessons have been consistently reinforced throughout my legal career. The first is, "Be a problem-solver." While every business has its challenges, attorneys are called upon to provide pragmatic counsel on how to address those challenges. My advice to younger attorneys is not to simply identify risks or potential road blocks for clients, but

to propose solutions that make good business sense. These proactive positive interactions go a long way in building strong client relationships.

The second is, “Know your audience and speak their language.” Whether I’m preparing to meet with a C-level executive, mid-level manager, engineer or sales person, knowing who you are speaking to, and understanding their perspectives and their needs, is key to effectively communicating. I do my due diligence and ask clients the right questions so I can understand both their objectives and their obstacles to provide the right strategic counsel.

How do you spend your time outside of the firm? How does it make you a better attorney?

My husband and I have been renovating our house for close to a year now. Due to the renovation, I spend most of my time outside of work on the ever-present “to do” list for the house. When I need a break from the renovation or from work, I love to spend time with my close friends and family, who make me laugh and keep me grounded in what’s most important in life. Taking a break every now and again gives me the energy, clarity, and focus that make me a better attorney when it’s time to re-engage.

Who’s Who at Hinckley Allen is an interview series that highlights each attorney’s life experience and skills. Read more interviews [here](#) to discover how our attorneys are valued business partners who positively impact their clients businesses, and help to achieve their goals.

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