

## WITL Member Spotlight

# Melanie Lipomanis

Melanie Lipomanis is the featured member for our Women in the Law Committee for the Fall issue. Melanie is a recent and welcome addition to the DRI WITL Committee, and has been an invaluable member of the Publications Subcommittee. Although Melanie has not been a DRI member very long, she jumped in with both feet and is always ready to lend a hand. We are thrilled to profile Melanie in our fall issue.

Melanie is an attorney with Porzio Bromberg & Newman in its Morristown, New Jersey office, and a member of the Firm's Education and Employment Litigation Practice Group. Melanie's practice focuses on defending management-side employers in all areas of employment litigation, wage and hour claims, unfair labor practice charges, OSHA investigations, and audits and investigations by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's/Homeland Security.

Melanie is a member of the New Jersey and New York State Bars, and serves on the New Jersey State Bar Committee on Higher Education, a member of DRI and serves on its Publications Committee, and teaches a class on employment law for Rutgers University.

### **How are you involved in DRI (What committee(s) do you serve/what leadership roles in DRI do you hold?)**

At Porzio, we are fortunate to have some excellent leaders from a range of practices who are long-time members of DRI. As my employment practice has been evolving and growing, I discussed the opportunity to get involved with DRI with these individuals and was immediately impressed with how DRI had played such a significant role in their successes. I joined the organization on their recommendation and had the opportunity to attend the Women In The Law conference in Scottsdale, Arizona. The quality of the programs and the extraordinary achievements of the membership really inspired me, so I joined the Publications Committee. Getting involved in this committee has been rewarding in terms of helping me to get to know individual



DRI members, and to learn about their work and what drives them professionally.

### **What is a typical day like for you? [Both before and after COVID]**

As an employment lawyer, I spend all of my time counseling corporate and non-profit clients on a wide range of critical employment law topics. Like so many others, my days are a consistent balancing act of taking care of my family and ensuring that my clients receive excellent service. One of the silver linings of COVID is that I was able to sell my home in the country (after years of trying!), and move to an area that is only 15 minutes from the office. This shorter

commute has allowed me to really maximize time with my family and also continue to make my clients the highest priority, especially during this difficult time.

### **What do you enjoy most about DRI?**

I enjoy so much about DRI, but the thing I enjoy most frequently is reading and participating in the Employment Law Digest. Especially now, as employment laws are changing due to COVID-19 and employers are working to bring employees back to the workplace, it is a great resource to keep up with trending issues that members are grappling with in various states. It is one of the best brain-trusts around. Members are generous with their time in responding to posts offering insights from their own experiences and knowledge base.

### **What is your best practice tip or what tip would you share with your younger self?**

Life does not have to be an endless competition. Trust your instincts when you are well versed in an area of law; trust in your colleagues when you find yourself in uncharted territory.

### **What is your favorite WITL memory/moment?**

The WITL conference in Arizona was the highlight of my year. I enjoyed networking and speaking with members about their areas of practice and experiences. Learning about the struggles and achievements of the members I

was able to spend time with, and listening to the program speakers was inspirational and informative. I sincerely hope to repeat the experience in 2021.

#### **Fun fact?**

Law is my second career. I wanted to travel the world when I was young, so I became a flight attendant first with Eastern then with United in its international division. It was a great experience engaging with other cultures in various regions of the world. I had three children under the age of 10 when I graduated from law school.

#### **What inspires you?**

My colleagues inspire me. We have a highly collaborative working environment and rely on each other's experience and skills frequently. Our team ethos is fostered by our leadership, and reinforced with a genuine commitment to diversity, inclusion, respect and admiration throughout the firm community. In 2020, Porzio was recognized as one of the best places to work in New Jersey for the 2nd consecutive year by NJBIZ.

#### **If you are/were WFH, what are you doing during the time you previously spent commuting to the office?**

Reading! I have expanded my morning news intake and reading list and still manage to be at my desk earlier than I would be if commuting. In addition, Porzio held a 21-day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge for personal growth and access to a database of links to books, articles, documentaries, podcasts and videos pertaining to race and racism. It was way too much material for me to get through in 21 mornings, so I turned it into a "however many mornings it takes" challenge. And then there is bread baking involved, of course.

#### **What is your best WFH tip or videoconferencing story?**

Lock the door so you do not have uninvited guests appearing in your video feed. My husband thinks no one in my meeting will notice him if he crouches very low to the ground sneaking across the room. No one ever fails to notice a big creepster in the background. So awkward!

#### **Save the Date!**

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## **2021 Women in the Law Seminar**

No matter the format, please save the date and plan to join us for the 2021 Women in the Law seminar: Own Your Worth in Law and Life on January 20-22, 2021 at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco, California. The WITL Seminar is always a highlight for many on our committee, and the 2021 seminar is sure to provide the education tips and tricks you need, and the networking, social interaction, and camaraderie you want. You will not want to miss the incredible array of programs in store for you, including:

- Tips and tricks on crisis management
- Client lessons during the pandemic

- How artificial intelligence can impact your client's businesses
- The business case for diversity on your trial team
- Addressing gender bias in settlement negotiations
- Silencing your inner critic and address anxiety in the legal practice

Please save the date and plan to join us in 2021!