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Kenedy strives to expand firm

Locke, Lord local leader brings passion to her job as she grows office strategically

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For Jennifer A. Kenedy, people skills remain important in her role as managing partner of Locke, Lord LLP's Chicago office.

A total of 112 lawyers, along with 105 other professionals and support staff, work in that office, the firm's third largest, she said.

"The way I see it, I manage 217 human beings and I make an effort to celebrate them and our history while working with them at our firm to ensure our success moving forward," she said.

In her leadership job, Kenedy said she acts as the face of the office both internally and externally within the legal field and overall community.

As a leader, Kenedy said, "I strive to be definitive, communicative and compassionate. I have a view of our Chicago office that I'm not shy about implementing."

Kenedy, managing partner since 2010, said she wants to grow the Chicago office "strategically with hard-working, like-minded lawyers who strengthen our practice groups and make teamwork and cross-selling a priority of their practice."

Locke, Lord's philosophy involves its lawyers working together as a team to cross-sell their services and practice focuses to firm clients and new clients, she said.

Michael P. Comiskey, a Locke, Lord partner and the firm's general counsel, said Kenedy possesses "professional passion" for her job.

"By passion, I mean she really cares about doing her best to get a good result and doing her best for a client or whatever constituency it might be," he said.

She also remains "willing and able to reach out and consult with others to test her views, reinforce her views or have people challenge her views," he said.

Kenedy, 44, began her legal career as an associate with the firm then called Lord, Bissell & Brook LLP in 1993. She became a partner in 2000 and focuses her practice on commercial litigation.

In 2007, Lord, Bissell merged with the Texas firm then called Locke, Liddell & Sapp LLP.

Locke, Lord now consists of about 650 lawyers working at 11 U.S. offices, along with London and Hong Kong outposts.

Locke, Lord remains a full-service law firm with at least 30 practice groups, including real estate/REIT, energy, financial services, insurance, litigation and intellectual property.

The core practices of the Chicago office include class-action defense, regulatory and transactional insurance, real estate, bankruptcy, general corporate, IP, aviation and commercial litigation, Kennedy said.

"A key part of my job is laterally hiring to strategically grow the office where it makes sense," she said. "I spend a lot of time meeting with lateral candidates."

In the last 20 months, Locke, Lord's Chicago office hired 20 lawyers laterally, most as partners, she said. With those moves, the firm beefed up its tax, corporate, insurance, consumer finance, IP, securities and real estate groups.

While Locke, Lord plans to continue adding lawyers to its Chicago office, a target number does not exist, Kenedy said.

"We remain committed in Chi-



Jennifer A. Kenedy

Managing Partner, Locke, Lord LLP's Chicago office.

- **Location:** Chicago.
- **Size:** Firmwide revenue of \$416.1 million for 2011.
- **Lawyers:** 112.
- **Age:** 44.
- **Law school:** Northwestern University School of Law, 1993.
- **Organizations:** Member, board of directors, Locke, Lord LLP.
- **Interests:** She enjoys playing golf in The Fairway Network, a local golf networking league for businesswomen and playing "Words With Friends" with her father on her iPad.

cago to continue to grow our corporate practice to serve not only clients in Chicago, but firm clients around the country and internationally who have legal needs in Chicago," she said.

Kenedy estimated she spends about a third of her time on management issues and the rest representing clients. For the past decade, she has worked as national outside trade secret protection counsel for Fidelity Investments.

She said the main challenge involves balancing her leadership and administrative responsibilities

with a full-time litigation practice.

"Either could be a full-time job, so my primary objective is to achieve a balance so I can be effective in both," she said. "It's a juggling act."

In 2004, Kenedy co-founded the firm's Women's Initiative. She continues serving as its co-chairwoman.

She also serves as chairwoman of the firmwide flexible work arrangement committee.

"I think that's a critical benefit to make available to our top talent because it enables us to give them the flexibility they need at the time they need it so we can retain our top talent," she said.

Earlier this year, Kenedy received the Women's Bar Association of Illinois' "Esther Rothstein Award." That award recognizes women who demonstrated a visionary approach to their professional endeavors by making a contribution to the well-being and empowerment of women.

Deane B. Brown, a partner at Beermann, Pritikin, Mirabelli, Swerdlove LLP, and the Women's Bar Association's immediate past president, said she nominated Kenedy for the award because of her support of female lawyers.

"What I think makes Jennifer so impressive is what she's managed to accomplish at such an early stage in her career," she said, adding Kenedy's practiced law for about 20 years.

"She's the managing partner of a major law firm's Chicago office and she's simultaneously raising three young children with her husband."

Kenedy, a Fairfax, Va., native, moved along with her family to the Chicago area as a teenager.

She said she became interested in a legal career at about age 12 through a family friend who worked as a lawyer.

After graduating from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Kenedy attended Northwestern University School of Law. She graduated cum laude from there in 1993.

Kenedy currently serves on Locke, Lord's board of directors.

Comiskey, the firm's general counsel, predicted Kenedy will move up in the firm's leadership.

"One day, she will be on the (firm's) 10-member executive committee," he said. "She might (eventually) be the chair or vice chair."

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