



# Next Gen



This week's Q&A with

**Jason Ulezalka**

New York Partner [Jason Ulezalka](#) is in Locke Lord's Debt Finance Practice Group, representing borrowers and lenders in debt finance transactions. Jason's practice focuses on the middle market, typically covering companies with EBITDA ranging from \$5 million to \$100 million. His borrower-side clients include private equity sponsors and their portfolio companies, as well as non-sponsor-owned companies looking to expand their operations or otherwise increase their financial leverage. His lender-side clients include commercial banks, direct lenders, hedge funds and other debt investors.



## More About Jason

### What has helped you to become successful in your field?

I think being described as "commercial" is one of the best compliments a lawyer can receive. I always try to remain cognizant of the actual business goals underlying a proposed transaction, and I think that approach has served me well.

### What's the biggest challenge you've faced in your career?

All lawyers face the challenge of keeping their practice relevant and toeing the line between developing an area of focus while not over-developing that area to the point where your services are not in demand. I think I've struck a nice balance in my career: I am a middle market debt finance lawyer. I have a certain type of "bread and butter" transaction, but am also regularly asked by clients to handle financings in more esoteric areas, whether it be a cell tower financing, a subscription line for a private equity fund, a real estate loan, an oil and gas loan and everything in between. I have been able to maintain a broad debt finance practice while periodically pivoting to certain subset areas of finance as dictated by our clients.

### Who has had the biggest professional influence in your life? // Did you have a mentor? If so, tell us the most important things you learned from them.

I have been privileged to work alongside a number of excellent senior debt finance lawyers at Locke Lord. The most important thing I have learned from them is how to develop my own sense of judgment. Spotting an issue during the course of a transaction is important, but being able to make the judgment call as to whether it is a material point and, if material, how best to resolve the issue, is a "next level" skill I have developed thanks to my mentors.

**What do you do to relax and reset after a long week?**

There is a farm about 15 minutes from my house. You can find me there on most weekends with my wife and 2-year-old son. The farm has cows, goats, pigs, sheep and other animals — it's a stark contrast from the way I spend my time during the week.

**What is your favorite thing about, or to do in, New York?**

My favorite thing about New York is the energy, and I've always loved walking around the city and taking it all in. Sometimes the energy can be a bit much — after making the mistake of moving too close to the Port Authority Bus Terminal, I decamped for the suburbs and now enjoy the buzz of the city from afar.

**What would be your fantasy career if you weren't a lawyer?**

I'd be the starting shooting guard for the Knicks. In the tradition of great Knicks teams of yesteryear, I'd play with the toughness of Charles Oakley, the determination of John Starks and knock down three-pointers like Allan Houston. I already have this last ability...in my mind at least.



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