



Sharing Her Success

An Interview with Lori Cohen

By Patricia J. Trombetta

You may be amazed to learn that Lori Cohen, a female litigator extraordinaire, has won 55 straight defense verdicts. Ms. Cohen is a shareholder with Greenberg Traurig in the firm's Atlanta office, where she chairs the Pharmaceutical, Medical Device & Health Care Litigation Group and co-chairs the Atlanta Litigation Practice. She is also a member of the DRI Women in the Law Committee. Her amazing streak of trial wins alone is reason to celebrate her as a dynamo to be reckoned with in the courtroom, but that word does not fully describe who she is or how she achieved her outstanding success.

Ms. Cohen, who has been recognized as one of the *National Law Journal's* "Top 40 Under 40" and "The 50 Most Influential Women Lawyers in America," attributes the successes she has achieved, not only for her clients, but for herself, to doing what she loves every day and being continually excited about the career she has chosen. The excitement in her voice when she describes working with her team, mentoring young associates and summer interns, and jetting around like a self-described "crazy Lori" to meet, greet, and speak shows that she truly loves her work. So how did she end up where she is now, at the pinnacle of her career?

Ms. Cohen made a decision early on to figure out what made her truly happy and then set out on a path to achieve it. Although there are trade-offs for choosing any particular path in life, she has no regrets for



the decisions that have brought her to this point in her career, where she has the ability to do what she loves, every day—try cases. As a summer intern, she worked with a strong female litigator who, a couple of decades ago, truly operated in a man's world, practicing construction law. This attorney became a mentor to Ms. Cohen and shaped her early perceptions of legal practice and ultimately played a large role in Ms. Cohen's decision to become a litigator. Figuring that out early, she then needed to determine, as a young associate, how to make it a reality. Ms. Cohen did not wait for someone to hand the opportunity to her, and instead did what she always does—once she figured out her goal, she

developed a strategy to achieve it.

Her strategy—to work hard, be enthusiastic about her work, and advocate for herself (because, as Ms. Cohen puts it, "No one can advocate or will advocate harder for you than you.")—seems to be as effective today as it was earlier in her career. Ms. Cohen looks for the same attributes in young associates to add to her team. She determined early on that she would take on extra work and make herself available to help the litigators in her first firm despite the fact that she was not assigned to work with them. By being available to those attorneys, working hard, and doing a great job, she created her own opportunities to achieve what she knew would make her happy.

As a young attorney, Ms. Cohen knew she had an advantage in the courtroom as the "only one in high heels" and that she was underestimated in the earlier years of her career. She stood out among the men that dominated the courtrooms at that time, just a couple of decades ago, and she made sure that she could relate to both men

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Women in the Law, from page 63 and women jurors, judges, and clients. She knew, even then, that you can make your point as easily with a smile on your face as without and that she would be better received that way than if she had an abrasive personality. She took the lessons from her early trial experiences with her mentors and adapted them to her own personality, essentially “Lori-izing” them, in her words.

Ms. Cohen also made sure she became visible in the profession by writing articles, speaking at every opportunity, and taking on roles, small at first but increasingly larger, in trials with her mentors. She was trying cases as a second year associate—and winning. Not surprisingly, she

gives her associates those same opportunities today. She tries to make herself accessible to everyone at the firm, and helps guide associates so they can realize their professional goals. She makes it a point to spend one-on-one time with everyone on her team at least once a year over a meal, is responsive to their questions, and helps to open up doors for their development. She remembers one particular time when she asked a client to allow one of her associates to accompany her at a trial. To make it happen, she agreed to bill only half the hourly rate and not to bill any travel expenses, affording a team member an invaluable opportunity to be exposed to the trial, the client, and key witnesses.

When asked about her success in the courtroom, Ms. Cohen is quick to give due credit to her team, which now totals 40 attorneys, male and female alike. Despite her humility, Ms. Cohen, a self-described “small town girl” from a blue collar neighborhood in Boston, has made a national name for herself. And while she attributes her success to hard work, it is clear that in addition to her work ethic, her intellect and analytical skills make her unbeatable in the courtroom. Even though she claims her “opposing counsel may be smarter, but I know I can outwork him,” Ms. Cohen has proven herself to be one of the smartest, most effective trial attorneys today—male or female. 