

**Professional Excellence Awards Supplement**

**DEALMAKERS CATEGORY.**

**‘Stay Up to Date in a Meaningful Way’ With Clients’ Industries, Lori Waldron Says**

Lori Waldron, co-chair of the life sciences practice at Sills Cummis & Gross, is a Law Journal Dealmakers winner. The below responses were lightly edited for style and clarity.

**What are some of your most satisfying successes of 2020, and why?**

2020 was a year of unprecedented business challenges. I am very proud of the way I responded to the pandemic and was able to help guide clients throughout the year.

A critical component of my success in 2020 was my ability to quickly adapt and stay fully engaged with my clients even with the social distancing and work-from-home barriers. Since I could not meet with clients in person (my favored way of interacting), I made the conscious effort to focus on regular video conferences, either to discuss particular issues or just to check in. I am very pleased that my personal relationships with my clients did not suffer (and even grew) as a result of these efforts.

Second, I took on the responsibility of leading my firm’s “Payroll Protection Program” (PPP) response team. For some businesses, receipt of the forgivable loan offered by the SBA would be the only way that the business could stay afloat. Leading my firm’s PPP team was a huge endeavor, as it involved becoming an expert on this complicated law with critical deadlines. One of my most satisfying successes in 2020 was watching first-hand the relief that some clients felt when they received the PPP funds.

**How have COVID-19 and other economic factors affected your practice area?**

All eyes have been on healthcare and the ability of pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies to diagnose, prevent and treat COVID-19 and to otherwise continue to develop and

commercialize medical products. As a life sciences attorney, I have had the privilege of assisting my clients to push their boundaries in 2020 and develop a new normal. As their advisor, I helped provide meaningful guidance as to how to minimize and avoid supply chain, business continuity and other disruptions. “Force Majeure” has quickly become part of the everyday business vernacular and I regularly counsel my clients through creative business and legal solutions to address the changing landscape.

**Amid a changing market for legal services, what does it take to become a trusted transactional lawyer in New Jersey?**

In order to achieve my level of success, I have had to, of course, work very hard to develop my legal skills. However, in order to become a trusted transactional lawyer, it is imperative that an attorney also be able to provide comprehensive business advice. Pharmaceutical and biotech businesses, in particular, can be quite technical and complicated in nature. I first always know and learn my client’s business and take a deep dive into its products and customers. Second, I make sure that I understand what business and legal risks my client is or is not willing to take. What is important to me as a lawyer may not be important to my client as a business leader. Next, I make sure that I stay abreast of what is going on in the industry generally. I am a voracious reader and start every day by reading the current industry and legal news. I also regularly attend (in person or virtual) industry conferences. That is the best way to stay up to date in a meaningful way with my feet on the ground.

**Dealmakers are extraordinarily busy people. What must firms do to ensure that they remain engaged with pro bono work, their communities and their families?**

I am very fortunate that my firm appreciates the value of pro bono work, communities and family. This support is embedded in our corporate culture. The firm recognizes that each one of us is a complex person, with families and hobbies and outside interests. We are all encouraged to engage in meaningful “outside of work” activities, with focus on the whole person, and are often commended for these other activities.

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