



International Women's Day Q&A with Nicole Ament and Ali Metz

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International Women's Day is held annually on March 8 to celebrate women's achievements throughout history and across nations. To commemorate the day and March's International Women's Month in general, **Nicole Ament** and **Ali Metz**, shareholders and co-chairs of Brownstein's Women's Leadership Initiative, give advice to female law school graduates, share insights about women who inspire them and recall obstacles they've overcome during their careers.

Women's enrollment as law students continues to outpace that of their male counterparts. What advice would you give to recent female law school graduates?

Nicole: Be very intentional and thoughtful about your career path and career choices. Don't go and practice litigation and corporate or securities law just because that's the available opening. Really think about what interests you in the practice of law. If it's writing a brief, go be a litigator. If it's negotiating agreements, then be a corporate or real estate lawyer. It's important to be deliberate about your path because you will be putting in a lot of long hours. There has to be some interest in the underlying work. Don't do it solely because it happens to be where you were placed.

Ali: The arc of your career is long. Be patient with your career. It's going to take twists and turns, but don't lose sight of what you want out of the long-term, even if it takes a while to get there. I often get asked, "Should I go to law school?" and "Why would women go to law school when statistics on females making equity partner are so poor?" I think that because law firm life is in many ways flexible, there are many ways to succeed in this environment. The law firm provides you with a framework, which can evolve over time. This is an empowering career, but it's important to be patient with it.

Complete this statement: This Women's History Month, I want to shine a light on _____. **Why?**

Nicole: The power and resiliency of women. Women are quite often the backbone and stability of an organization, and I think that comes from all levels. Retention rates of women tend to be higher and longevity in companies with women tend to be higher. We don't always recognize that.

Ali: The awareness that women collaborate differently, communicate differently and build consensus differently. Those are all sorely needed strengths in business, politics and life. We should be shining a light on these unique skills that women possess and prioritizing them as real assets in a business context.

Tell us about a woman or women who currently inspire you.

Nicole: I have a good friend, Jenifer Brandeberry, who has one of the top lobbying practices in the state of Colorado. She and a partner have run their firm for several years. Jenifer is a strong businesswoman who has raised an amazing child. I've enjoyed watching her many successes. I like to see how she continues to control her career and handle her personal life.

Ali: I am fortunate to have many wonderful, inspiring and powerful women in my immediate family: two sisters, two grandmothers, aunts, my mother, my mother-in-law and my own two daughters. This tribe constantly provides me with inspiration in a myriad of ways. I also recently read *Becoming* by Michelle Obama and attended her event in Denver and was so struck by who she is and what she's accomplished. She's someone

who came from modest means and demanded excellence and perfection for herself from the beginning. Most notably, she stepped back at various points in her life to ask herself important, existential questions: “Is this what makes me happy? Is this what makes me the best person I can be? Is this where I should be devoting my energy and talent?” I found her perspective and quest for constant growth and introspection to be incredibly inspiring.

How do you want to set an example for the next generation of women leaders in the world?

Nicole: I am working to be thoughtful with my choices. I think many women tend to be people pleasers. If we’re asked to do something, attend something or take on a project, we say yes without thinking. There has to be a cost analysis as there are only so many hours in the day. If I take on this project, if I take on this volunteer role in the firm or if I’m helping out with this event at my child’s school, something else has to give. I want to be intentional and want other women to know that it’s OK to say yes or no. We have to be intentional in our choices and not just take on everything as it comes upon us.

Ali: This is a question that motivates me on a daily basis as the mother of two young girls who are watching my every move. You have an obligation to never give up on yourself or your goals and to use your resources and position of power to make the world a better place. It’s important to help others, to give back with your time and energy, and to bring people along. You have to lead by example and walk the walk. There are power structures, dynamics and institutions that are inhospitable, particularly to women, and have been for a long time. I want other women to recognize their power to change those things.

Can you tell us about an obstacle you overcame in your career? How did you do it?

Nicole: I’ve been at Brownstein for 20 years. While I was in the senior ranks of associate, a couple of key partners that I worked for left the firm for different reasons. It was during a pivotal time in my career when it was important to have a mentor to help take me from associate to partner, guide me through client relationships and serve as my sponsor. I had to reestablish who I was within the firm and who I worked for. I had to find new sponsors and mentors and create a different path than I had originally intended. It was challenging and it took assertiveness and confidence for me to show who I was and how I was going to make it happen.

Ali: We’re constantly facing obstacles! One challenging period was after I came back from maternity leave with my second daughter and was up for partner. I was exhausted, stressed out and felt like I was under a microscope with no wiggle room for mistakes. That’s not a recipe for success! I had to repeatedly remind myself of who I was and that my body of work was not limited to this immediate five-month period. The rebound from that experience was the most trying. Everything feels so immediate when you’re in an intense situation. Another obstacle I faced was the mental shift I had to make after becoming a partner. Once you make partner and realize you have this job forever, I had to take a look at my professional identity to articulate what was important and fulfilling to me. It took a lot of introspection and time to think about who I am, where I choose to spend my time and what I want to be known for. That journey is ongoing.

Meet The Team

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