

LAW FIRM MANAGING
PARTNER OF THE YEAR

SUSAN MURLEY

WILMER CUTLER
PICKERING HALE
AND DORR

By ALM Staff



Susan Murley of Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr

Courtesy photo

What was your route to the top?

I started my legal career at WilmerHale 32 years ago and was elevated to partner in 1994. I held a variety of leadership positions at the firm before being elected to co-managing

partner in 2012. The first of these positions was as chair of the Corporate Department. After 14 years in this role, I became chair of the Transactional Department, which includes the Corporate Department and several other

practice groups, and then assistant managing partner a short time later. I also served on WilmerHale's Management Committee during this time.

I gained an intimate understanding of the firm—its practices, clients and culture—and of law firm economics from holding these positions, which prepared me to take on the role of co-managing partner.

Looking back, what do you wish you had known when you started out in the legal profession?

If you asked my 25-year-old self the same question, I'm sure I'd have a different answer, but looking back, I can't say I'd change anything. The 'not knowing' has kept me motivated. The unknown is vast and, at times, unnerving, but it is a story untold. Without the resulting anticipation and excitement, I believe my motivation and hunger would

wane. And without that, I wouldn't be where I am today.

What is the best leadership advice you've given or received, and why do you think it was effective?

Early in my career, when I was developing and better understanding my own leadership style, I was often hesitant to commit to a certain course of action when faced with a major decision. I would weigh the pros and cons and ask myself what past great leaders would have done. This led me to a point where I was questioning my instincts rather than finding resolution in my own judgement. As I struggled with this, a wise person told me to embrace the style that feels true to me and reflects who I am. This was a critical moment for me. As I tuned into my instincts, I found confidence in a leadership style that is all my own—one built on my unique strengths.