

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

WilmerHale's Murley joins ranks of female managing partners

SELECT COMPANY

By Lisa van der Pool | lvanderpool@bizjournals.com



Susan Murley is co-managing partner of one of the largest and most successful law firms in Boston.

W. MARC BERNSAU | BUSINESS JOURNAL

In January, Susan Murley will take over for William Lee — one of the most well-known attorneys in Boston — as co-managing partner at WilmerHale.

For Murley, Lee has been an important mentor and a role model throughout her 25-year legal career at WilmerHale.

"He balances a legal practice and leadership of the firm, and he always practices at the highest level," said Murley. "He leads with integrity and he has helped me every day."

Murley, 52, is set to become co-managing partner of Boston-based WilmerHale Jan. 1. Murley and Robert Novick will serve as co-managing partners of the firm for a three-year term.

She'll be co-managing one of the largest and most successful law firms in Boston: In 2010, WilmerHale's profits per partner was \$1.3 million, up 17.2 percent from \$1.13 million in 2009, making it one of the firm's most successful years. Revenue at the firm increased by 2.2 percent to \$962 million in 2010, up from \$941 million in 2009.

WilmerHale has 890 lawyers firmwide, and 271 lawyers in its Boston office.

Murley, who will become one of only a handful of female managing partners in Boston, said her appointment is also a significant message for women, illustrating that "hard work does matter and it doesn't matter what your background or gender is."

Murley, who grew up in Wakefield, wasn't entirely sold on a legal career when she graduated from Tufts University. It was a toss-up between law school and teaching. So after college she moved to Washington, D.C., and worked as a paralegal at Covington & Burling LLP to figure out what she thought about the legal industry.

She liked it.

Although initially, "I thought I was put on this earth to be a litigator," while she was a summer associate at WilmerHale during law school, she realized she liked the collaborative approach that it takes to be a corporate lawyer.

Over the past 25 years at WilmerHale, she's built up a strong corporate practice, with clients that include Akamai

SUSAN MURLEY

Title: Co-managing partner at WilmerHale

Education: Bachelor's degree, Tufts University, 1981; Juris Doctorate, University of Virginia Law School, 1986

Age: 52

Quote: "Recruiting and training the next generation of lawyers is certainly a key challenge for any law firm and something we pay attention to."

Technologies, Aspect Medical Systems, The First Marblehead Corp. and Bio-Sphere. Her work includes acting as an outside general counsel to firms, plenty of mergers and acquisitions and initial public offerings and follow-on public offerings.

Her prowess at both handling cases and her management roles at the firm caught the attention of Lee.

"Susan is an extraordinary lawyer and, as the chair of the transactional practice, has established herself within the firm as a leader. Her unique combination of vision and judgment, together with her ability to build consensus and execute, make her a perfect managing partner," said Lee in an email.

During her three-year tenure as co-managing partner, Murley will be focused on a handful of initiatives, with training young lawyers and managing client costs two of the more important challenges moving forward.

During the next three years Murley will also continue her legal practice, in addition to co-managing her law firm.

In her limited spare time, Murley is focused on being a greater mother to her 17-year-old daughter and 14-year-old son.