



Shapiro of Herrick, Feinstein LLP: Life is a journey

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Name: Ellen Shapiro

Title: Partner

Company Name: Herrick, Feinstein LLP

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What year did you start your career in commercial real estate: 1995

What recent project or transaction are you most proud of?

I'm most proud of recently helping a New York-area non-profit arts company buy a home. The company does very interesting productions, and its staff feels very strongly about working there, to the point of being tearfully happy when the transaction closed. It wasn't just about dollars and cents; it was about a giant step toward realizing its mission.

What recent honor, achievement or recognition has meant the most to you and why?

It wasn't recognition per se, but recently, a client of about five years said to me, "I'm hearing from a lot of people, but I trust you. Tell me what you, Ellen Shapiro, would think I should do." I felt like the counselor and advisor I always want to be for client. When a client essentially says, "I know you're looking out for me," that's as good as it gets.

Who or what has been the strongest influence on your career and why?

Herbert Weinstein, my mentor early on in my career at Proskauer Rose. He passed away suddenly in 1998. He taught me how to close a deal. Unfortunately, he taught me what not to do, by negative example. Mentors can be that way -- they can have flaws. I learned that I could -- and had to -- learn almost anything to serve a client. I think it is funny to ask a lawyer his/her specific specialty because you do whatever your clients need.

What is the first thing you do when you arrive in the office in the morning?

I enjoy walking around the office and saying "Good morning" to everyone on my floor. Personal contact is very important.

What time management strategies do you find to be the most effective for you?

Time management is an oxymoron. There is not enough time, so we squeeze what we can out of every minute. I recently took a call in the nearest broom closet before my son's school performance! Technology is a curse and a blessing.

What is the best advice you have received and who was it from?

Herbert Weinstein taught me to understand every aspect of a real estate transaction. You don't have to be an expert in every area -- that's why you have colleagues -- but you have to understand the implications of every part of a deal. That's essential guidance that I still follow.

List 3 women that you would like to have drinks / dinner with and where would you go?

Eleanor Roosevelt in Hyde Park, Mother Theresa in Calcutta and Christine Lagarde of the IMF in Paris. Christine can pick the location; she'll know the best restaurants.

What is your favorite quote?

"Life is a journey."

What did you want to be when you grew up?

A stand-up comic.

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