



2021 Women in Professional Services: Jennifer Hower, Herman Katz Cangemi Wilkes & Clyne, LLP

March 23, 2021 - Spotlights

Name: Jennifer Hower, Esq.

Title: Partner

Company Name: Herman Katz Cangemi Wilkes & Clyne, LLP

Real estate associations or organizations that you are currently a member of:

Institute for Professionals in Taxation (IPT); Nassau County Bar Association Tax Certiorari and Condemnation Committee; Suffolk County Bar Association Tax Certiorari and Condemnation Committee; Long Island Builders Institute (LIBI).

In the past year, what project, transaction or accomplishment are you most proud of?

Over the past year, the way in which real estate tax appeals are filed has changed remarkably. What was previously a very paperwork intense process is now largely done electronically. This change in process required a great deal of cooperation between taxing jurisdictions and the law firms representing petitioners. I am very proud of the leadership role my firm played in helping to facilitate those changes in practice. It required a great deal of cooperation and buy-in among the parties. The changes ensured the petitioners rights were preserved, while also ensuring the safety and well-being of all involved.

What steps have you taken to ensure the continued success of your firm?

When the pandemic struck last year, and the state began limiting the number of workers who could report to the office, our firm was able to shift almost 100% of staff members to on-line work. Our critical office functions were maintained and after an initial period of adjustment, we found creative ways to continue to thrive in this unprecedented situation. With a little flexibility and creativity, we have been able to negotiate and resolve cases, and pursue our client's causes through the courts without missing a beat. In addition, we have instituted a program of cross-training for all of our staff position, so that in times of high volume, or times of crises, there will be sufficient back-up to support our needs and get the job done.

Why should women consider a career in commercial real estate and related services?

Women should certainly consider a career in commercial real estate and related services. Many women are natural problem-solvers and their talents lend themselves to this field. Whether it is finding a suitable property for an investor, negotiating a sale price or a reduction in real estate taxes,

women tend to be able to look at a problem from many different angles, and develop effective solutions. We are accustomed to multi-tasking, prioritizing and meeting deadlines, all of which contribute to success in this industry. There are certainly obstacles, including having to work harder to be taken seriously and, in some areas, a lack of mentorship. However, as more women succeed and rise to leadership positions, the path for their successors will become wider and easier to travel.

How have you adapted and changed in the last 12 months?

Just like many other professionals, I have had to make certain adjustments to my daily work life in the last 12 months. Meetings and court conferences have all transitioned to on-line platforms and I have traded my work office for my home office. I have had to make more of a concerted effort to stay connected to my partners, associates and staff, as we do not see each other on a daily basis. I have tried to be more flexible and available to my clients and their needs, as this has been a very trying year for everyone. The pandemic has also driven home the importance of taking care of myself both mentally and physically.

How do you keep your team motivated despite conflicts and obstacles?

This year has been full of obstacles, but our firm has tried very hard to listen to the concerns and feedback that our staff convey and let them know that their input is taken very seriously. In addition, we try hard to recognize everyone's individual efforts and contributions to the team. We want staff to know that we are truly "all in" together. It is important that everyone know that they are valued members of the group.

Women have made significant progress in the last year towards equality in the workplace. How do you advocate for your fellow women in real estate?

I have been fortunate to be part of panel discussions at the Institute for Professionals in Taxation (IPT) Property Tax Symposium and their Annual Meeting that specifically addressed women's participation in the tax field. Members of this national organization felt it was helpful for women to have the space to discuss issues that were specific to their experience and share information with one another that may be helpful. Later, as part of the Property Tax Symposium Committee, I worked to ensure that the panel discussion would continue to be held each year, going forward. I sincerely believe that women see better results and more forward movement when we stand together...reaching out to help one another up the ladder.

What books or social media influencers would you recommend to other women?

I would recommend "How Women Rise" by Salley Helgsen and Marshall Goldsmith. The book examines some behaviors which can prevent women from reaching their goals and provides suggestions on how those behaviors can be changed or overcome. It is practical advice which can help you up your game and become a better leader. In addition, I would recommend "Small Acts of Leadership" by G. Shawn Hunter. Most individuals are not born leaders. However, with some grit and perseverance, leadership skills can be learned and integrated into your daily life. As the author notes, "small consistent efforts, practiced over time, can yield big results for you, and the people around you." This book provides suggestions in a relatable, practical way.