



2021 Women in Professional Services: Nina Rokat, Olshan Frome Wolosky LLP

March 23, 2021 - Spotlights

Name: Nina Rokat

Title: Partner in Real Estate Practice Group, Leader of the Commercial Leasing Practice and Co-Administrative Partner of the Firm

Company Name: Olshan Frome Wolosky LLP

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

Member of WX, NY Women Executives in Real Estate, invitation-only association of executive-level women in NY commercial real estate and serves as Mentor (WX's mentorship program).

Member of International Council of Shopping Centers and Urban Land Institute.

Member of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and serves in the Mentor Program.

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

From the onset of and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, I have tirelessly guided and counseled existing and new clients on the evolving business and legal issues impacting the real estate industry. Acting as both business advisor and lawyer, I have taken a lead in the industry, negotiating the most favorable terms possible with all counterparties on behalf of my clients. As the COVID-19 pandemic has created an immediate hardship on borrowers and lenders alike, I am assisting clients with both lease and debt restructurings, as well as capital raising opportunities. I have actively represented and advised both landlords and tenants in lease restructuring situations across the country and have been providing counsel and innovative solutions to a broad range of clients including borrowers, investors, lenders, developers, landlords and tenants, with particular focus on restaurants and flex space companies.

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

In my view, working in the commercial real estate industry as a real estate lawyer is one of the most rewarding and exciting legal career paths that you can choose. I have spent my entire career in New York's commercial real estate market and beyond, and I have seen the number of women in key positions rising. While the commercial real estate market is still a male dominated field, many women continue to pave the way and create opportunities. I have served as a mentor to numerous

women lawyers and others in the profession and have tried to serve as an example of the level of grit and hard work required for women to continue to advance.

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

As someone who enjoys speaking and presenting at industry events, attending industry functions, and networking with colleagues, I had to rethink how I was going to connect with friends and colleagues in the industry. I saw a real opportunity to be of service to my clients who were hit hard from day one and made a quick 360° pivot to effectively reach them. Thanks to Olshan's technology platform I was able to arrange face to face meetings and provide much needed advice. I upped my social media game and was able to share helpful content with clients and colleagues. As everyone in the industry was in the same boat, we collectively figured out fun and innovative ways to connect via Zoom social events and targeted events. I have a lot of restaurant clients and missed seeing them over dinner, so I also had to get creative in connecting with them as well.

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

There perhaps has been no greater obstacle than COVID-19 in our recent memory, and as a leader throughout this difficult period I have tried to stand as an example of what can be accomplished despite the many obstacles placed in one's path. I do expect as much from the colleagues that I mentor as I give, inspiring them to be their best professionally and personally. I have continued to accept the most challenging projects and have consistently put in 100% so that my team can see that hard work pays off in results for our clients. I have also sought and assumed leadership roles, demonstrating that there is a path forward giving women a voice in shaping the future of the commercial real estate and the legal industries.

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 serve in numerous leadership roles and find this to be the best way to effectuate change. I am the chair of Olshan's Hiring Committee and founder/chair of Olshan's Women's Committee, which serves as a networking, business development and mentoring platform for the firm's women lawyers and their clients/colleagues. I am well aware of challenges that women face in a male-dominated industry like real estate, which has motivated me to act as a leader/mentor to female attorneys at Olshan, and to women generally in the real estate industry.

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

As a co-administrative partner of Olshan I worked with the entire management team from the outset of the COVID-19 virus to ensure that our attorneys and staff had all the supports needed in place to remain safe, healthy and productive. Our advance planning armed our attorneys and staff members with the technology necessary to work remotely, ensuring that we were providing optimal client service as part of our long-standing commitment to the business continuity. We also took immediate action in implementing strategic expense reductions and sustaining those expense reductions throughout. And we continued to invest significantly in areas that were critical to our ongoing success, including technology. Our proactive management approach enabled us to maintain continuity of business at a high level and secure manner while providing a safe environment for our personnel.

