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Q&A

## How I Made It to Law Firm Leadership: 'I Try to Incorporate Compassion and Lightheartedness Into My Leadership Style,' Says Manish Mehta of Benesch, Friedlander Coplan & Aronoff

"Sometimes opportunities will arise that seem to call for qualifications or experience that you may not possess. Be confident that you will excel in the role. Step up and seize the opportunity."

September 26, 2022 at 09:32 AM

How I Made It



Tasha Norman

### **Manish Mehta, 42, Benesch, Friedlander, Coplan & Aronoff, Chicago.**

**Job title:** Chicago office, partner in charge.

**Practice area:** Intellectual property litigation and transactions.

**Law school and year of graduation:** The John Marshall Law School, 2006, J.D.

**How long have you been at the firm?** Five years.

**Were you a partner at another firm before joining your present firm?** Brinks Gilson & Lione (2014); Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton (2015-2017).

**What year were you promoted to your current position at your current firm?** 2022.

**Were there any surprises you faced after becoming a leader at the firm?** Not necessarily surprises, but an underappreciation of the commitment by staff and other nontimekeepers to ensure that the office runs smoothly on a daily basis.

**What's been the biggest change, day to day, in your routine since becoming a leader at the firm?** Making time for nonbillable activities, such as office-related decisions and being a sounding board for our management team.

**What do you think was the deciding point for the firm in elevating you to your current position?** It is the commitment to the firm and its unique culture. We take being Benesch seriously at the firm. Many of us were drawn to the firm's culture of being focused on the well-being of our team and putting the best interests of our personnel ahead of personal goals. This culture resonated with me and is something that I promoted and encouraged at our team level. It is key to recruiting as well as retention. I think the firm recognized this trait and wanted to ensure that we continue to promote this culture at the office level.

**What advice would you give to someone whose goal is to ascend to firm leadership?** Do not be afraid to step up. Sometimes opportunities will arise that seem to call for qualifications or experience that you may not possess. Be confident that you will excel in the role. Step up and seize the opportunity.

**Who had the greatest influence in your career that helped propel you to your leadership role?** Gregg Eisenberg, managing partner, Benesch. Gregg has a magnetic personality and carries a team-first attitude. I've learned a lot about firm management from Gregg over the years by simply watching how he interacts with others and the impression he is able to make within a short period of time. Leadership comes in many forms and styles. Gregg's is one of compassion and lightheartedness—two characteristics that I try to incorporate into my leadership style.

**Knowing what you know now if you had a chance to advise or mentor your younger self, what advice would you give to yourself?** The work will always be there. Take time for yourself, family and loved ones. Your mental health is important and requires nurturing from time to time. Do not be afraid to take a break.

**How do you keep your teams motivated during these unprecedented times?**

- “Town hall” meetings with every department
- Checking in with people on their wants and needs
- Always making people aware I’m always around

**What’s an accomplishment that you are proudest of?** Helping build an IP litigation practice with my partner, Kal Shah, that consists of talented and diverse individuals. Our group is over 50% diverse and consists of talented attorneys at all levels and varying technical degrees.

**What’s the one characteristic that you believe every firm leader should possess?** Integrity

**What is the one behavior or trait that you have seen derail more leaders’ careers?** Ego

**Choose three key terms you would like to focus on for 2022.**

1. Being a good listener
2. Empathy
3. What is next for our Chicago office?

**Based on recent events like COVID and work-from-home policies, has your definition of success changed since 2020/2021?**

Our team adapted very well to the COVID work from home policies. I think success is measured by your team coming together in tough times and coming out ahead. We have still maintained tremendous growth in the firm and continue to do so with a hybrid schedule.

Yes, my definition of success has changed. A measure of success cannot be judged by “face time” or “office time” anymore. We need to listen to our team and clients’ needs and develop a solution/policy that meets our clients’ needs but also allows our team to thrive.

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