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Krista Hanvey of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher

Lisa Helem, Executive Editor | MP McQueen, Editor | August 12, 2025

Please describe two of your most substantial, recent wins in practice.

Over the fall of 2023 and early 2024, I was privileged to serve as the lead compensation and benefits counsel for Pioneer Natural Resources in its \$64.5 billion acquisition by ExxonMobil, the largest deal, by far, in my career to date. I worked closely with members of Pioneer's management team and of the Compensation Committee of Pioneer's Board to negotiate deal documentation, craft retention arrangements, and prepare employee communications that provided adequate protection and reassurances to Pioneer's 2,200 employees in this transformative transaction for the Permian Basin.

I am also currently advising AT&T on its recently announced \$5.75 billion acquisition of Lumen Technologies' consumer fiber operations, which will significantly expand AT&T's investment in high-speed fiber network operations across the United States. I have led employment, labor, and benefits negotiations on this deal, which is expected to close in the first half of 2026 subject to regulatory approvals.

This transaction is particularly interesting as AT&T is standing up a new entity to house the business, and post-closing expects to sell partial ownership of that entity to a JV partner. I get to work with the company to create a new platform with employees, benefit plans, and compensation structures that operate independently.

What is the most important lesson you learned as a first-year attorney and how does it inform your practice today?

You aren't supposed to know everything. After graduating from law school and starting at Gibson Dunn, I remember being terrified that someone would ask me a question and I wouldn't know the answer. I was honestly afraid when the phone rang. As I advanced through my first few years, I built a knowledge base and learned that lawyers don't necessarily know the answer to every question off the top of their heads—however, they know how to find the answer and have good judgment in close calls.

A successful law practice is all about constantly learning, growing, and keeping an open mind. You have to continuously push yourself to not only stay on top of legal developments (in a sometimes rapidly changing legal landscape), but to also think about issues creatively in order to best achieve your client's objectives. That also means surrounding yourself with a team of great colleagues where you can share ideas and perspectives.

I love solving problems and this job is about just that—taking complex, difficult issues and finding practical solutions. I know a few more things



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off the top of my head these days, but the best days are the ones where I really have to dig in and figure it out.

How do you define success in your practice?

My most successful client relationships are those where I have really become a part of their in-house teams. I know their benefit plans and compensation programs, but I also know the personalities of their board and management team members, their company's strategic goals and their most pressing business challenges. While technical expertise is important, being able to frame an issue for different audiences to explain legal considerations in a digestible format and to come up with creative solutions that can practically be implemented—within budget and time constraints—can make you instrumental for your clients. I view success as being the “go to” lawyer for my clients over many years.

What are you most proud of as a lawyer?

I was the only executive compensation and benefits attorney in our Dallas office for several years. After making partner in 2019, I focused on recruiting associates both internally and externally to build a team of experts at all levels that could service our growing client base. After being named co-chair of our national Executive Compensation and Employee Benefits practice, I worked with my fellow co-chair, Sean Feller, to build our national compensation and benefits team in a similar manner. Watching younger associates develop, lead client calls and move on to other adventures—or sometimes even make partner themselves—has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my career thus far. I am proud of the team I've helped to build.

Who is your greatest mentor in the law and what have they taught you?

I have been fortunate to have many mentors in my legal practice, but Jeff Chapman stands out as one of the best. He has taught me several lessons since joining Gibson Dunn in 2011, when I was only a second-year lawyer. He once told me that all you have to do to be successful is surround yourself with people who are smarter than you. He was right.

Building a network of people you can call on to bounce ideas off of—and being there for your network—makes what can be a demanding profession much more enjoyable. He also taught me that despite your best efforts, you won't be perfect, and that's OK. You just have to own up to mistakes and do your best to make things right.

Finally, through his example, I have really embraced this profession as about the people first, whether that be clients, colleagues or even opposing counsel. If you are kind to the people around you and do your best to help others whenever you can, getting a deal signed, drafting a complex incentive plan, or even completing a difficult management transition can be a positive experience for everyone involved.

Tell us your two favorite songs on your summer music playlist.

This is tough, but I'll go with one new song and one older one: Chappell Roan's “Pink Pony Club,” which I hear everywhere lately and has a way of just getting stuck in my head, and Outkast's “Hey Ya!,” my go to for running or just dancing in the living room!