



# 15 Rainmakers Share How They Shine

BY PATRICK FOLLIARD

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## PAMELA L. COX

Partner  
Marshall, Gerstein & Borun  
LLP

Intellectual Property  
Chicago, Ill.

Years Practicing: **14**



**Pamela Cox never assumed she was a rainmaker.** “I’m focused more on the joys of having a thriving practice than the dollars,” she says.

“The remuneration that comes with that is great, but it’s not why I get up on a Saturday morning to work on a deal. I can’t stop myself. For me, it’s a pleasure.”

As chair of Intellectual Property Transactions and a partner at Marshall, Gerstein & Borun, located in Chicago, Cox primarily concentrates on intellectual property transactions, protection and transfer for clients ranging from multinational corporations to nonprofit institutions. Like many patent lawyers, Cox has a background in science. And while she says her BS in biology only lays a foundation, it still affords her a level of comfort.

Cox speaks frequently. Topics include closing the gulf between the business and the legal side of licensing. As life science chair for the Licensing Executive Society International, she talks about demystifying license agreements for nonlegal professionals. “It shouldn’t be so daunting. Getting through a 400-page agreement can actually be fun. It’s all how you approach it,” she says with infectious enthusiasm.

Whatever the matter, says Cox, she takes her clients’ urgencies as her own. “I try to keep up with my inbox. You never know when something big might come up.”

Looking ahead, Cox concedes five-year plans are admirable; in fact, she recommends them. But nothing is more valuable than the unexpected referral. “Everything comes down to chemistry and timing,” she says. “You can’t predict new work. But you need to be ready for it.”



## VIVIAN C. DE LAS CUEVAS-DIAZ

Partner  
Holland & Knight LLP  
Real Estate  
Miami, Fla.

Years Practicing: **15**

**Early in her legal career, Vivian C. de las Cuevas-Diaz** was asked to devote herself exclusively to business

development. Partners wanted her to bring in new clients and let other attorneys do the substantive work. She refused. “I can sell my colleagues and let clients know we have a good product. But I can sell better when I’m doing the work. Sure, rainmaking would be a great life. But I don’t think it would work out in the long run

for me. If my team is here on a Saturday, I’m here in the office working with them.”

A real estate partner in Holland & Knight’s Miami office, de las Cuevas-Diaz deals with complex real estate transactions for both private and public clients. She also represents developers in a range of projects, including land development, condominium, office and single-family development and hotels.

“I grew up watching my Cuban immigrant parents working incredibly hard to make a life for us in Miami and give us good opportunities. It’s from them that I took a strong work ethic. Whether it’s ballet or school or whatever, I worked hard. It’s no different with my career.”

With her clients, de las Cuevas-Diaz describes herself as a hand holder and a therapist. “I am there for them always. It’s a big part of what I like about the job,” she says. “But I’m also there working very hard to make sure my clients’ best interests are protected.”

## PABLO C. FERRANTE

Partner  
Mayer Brown LLP  
Energy

Houston, Texas

Years Practicing: **15**



**Early on his journey to becoming a rainmaker,** Pablo Ferrante turned a potential drawback into a definite asset.

“Being from a foreign country could be a disadvantage when trying to grow a practice doing domestic work in the U.S. Instead, I’ve used my cultural diversity, dual civil law and common law education and language skills to develop a niche practice,” explains the native Argentinian. “I focus on cross-border oil and gas project development and transactional work for companies doing business in Latin America, particularly in the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America, such as Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Argentina.”

Energy and Latin America are strategic and important practice areas for the global firm Mayer Brown. As a partner focusing on the energy industry in Latin America, Ferrante plays a major role in developing and sustaining business and high-profile engagements for the firm.

Ferrante began his career as a lawyer in Buenos Aires. He came to the U.S. to earn an LL.M at Northwestern University School of Law, thinking he would return to Argentina to continue his practice there. Instead, he accepted an internship at a firm in Houston and decided to stay on. Further encouraged, he successfully sat for the bar and remained in the United States. After working for a smaller regional firm in Houston, he moved to Mayer Brown five years ago.

“To be really successful, you have to make sure your clients’ goals are your top priority. My main driver is for my clients to achieve their goals and be successful. If they succeed, so do I.”

**JERRY D. HAMILTON**  
Managing Shareholder  
Hamilton, Miller & Birthisel,  
LLP

Civil Trial Litigation  
Miami, Fla.

Years Practicing: **22**



**Third generation lawyer Jerry Hamilton** founded Hamilton, Miller & Birthisel in 2006. He opened the original Miami office with three attorneys. Today, there are 40. Half of the firm's partners are minorities, and a third are women.

"There's dynamism to our diversity," says Hamilton, whose civil litigation practice focuses on defending major insurers and corporations. "Everyone brings a different and valuable perspective to the firm."

Hamilton came to Florida from Jamaica as a teenager. He earned his JD at the University of Florida. Rainmaking started to happen early—sometime between his fifth and seventh year. "When I started trying cases, it turned for me," he remembers. "I became the decision-maker and the problem-solver for my clients, and I loved that role. And then clients started coming to me directly. A light went off. I had built solid relationships and could now go out and develop more business."

The firm has offices throughout Florida, New York, Virginia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Bahamas and Jamaica. "Our Caribbean presence differentiates us from the competition. When corporations have a matter in the islands, we are the go-to law firm. This has contributed a lot to our growth."

Hamilton's philosophy is to make business development a routine part of his life. For him, that means working on relationships with his present clients, whom he considers friends, and building new relationships with potential clients. "We're dealing with real people who stay awake at night worrying about their businesses. I want to give them peace of mind. I want them to think of me as the insurance they can always rely on."



**JOSEPH M. HANNA**  
Partner  
Goldberg Segalla  
Sports and Entertainment  
Buffalo, N.Y.  
Years Practicing: **9**

**At age six, Joseph Hanna** set his sights on becoming president of the United States, and he believed the only way to get there was to become

a lawyer. "I wanted to be the president, and I thought becoming a lawyer would help. I come from a blue collar family in Buffalo, N.Y. There were no lawyers in my family, but I was determined."

Hanna met his goal of becoming an attorney and seems to be well on his way to becoming president. After graduating from the SUNY Buffalo Law School in 2005, he was hired by Goldberg Segalla, the firm's first associate hired directly from law school.

Within two-and-a-half years he made partner, focusing on sports and entertainment law. "I'm not about the hard sell," says Hanna. "If a client wants to work with us, we will do the best job at the best rate, and we will grow together."

An avid golfer, he combines his love for the game with business development and philanthropy. In 2008, Hanna founded Bunkers in Baghdad Inc., a nonprofit that collects and ships golf equipment for rehabilitative and recreational purposes to U.S. troops throughout the world. Bunkers has collected more than 5.2 million golf balls and 250,000 golf clubs for wounded warriors, veterans and active duty military members.

But Hanna doesn't spend all of his time on the links. "I'm involved with both business development and the substantive work. I'm always around for my clients and here to help whenever they call upon me. It is all about relationship building and being comfortable with one another. At the end of the day, if there is a problem, my clients call me first because they know that I will be there for them and will not stop until they are happy."

**S. MANOJ JEGASOTHY**  
Managing Partner—Pittsburgh  
Office

Gordon Rees Scully  
Mansukhani, LLP  
Commercial Litigation  
Pittsburgh, Penn.

Years Practicing: **17**



**When asked by associates** how best to make partner, rainmaking attorney Manoj Jegasothy tells them, "Make it so the firm has to make you partner. Usually that's the result when you have unique legal skills or you've developed enough business that the firm has to recognize it. Once you're in that place, you control your own fate. You have your own clients and your own work. That's real autonomy."

"At firms, successful business development means a greater degree of contribution, which leads to a greater degree of respect and compensation. But the biggest thing it means is autonomy."

A commercial litigator with a specialty in breach-of-contract disputes, class-action matters and antitrust, Jegasothy is managing partner of Gordon Rees's Pittsburgh office.

He says responsiveness and quality legal work are vital to sustaining existing clients—an essential part of rainmaking. In addition to keeping clients happy, he seeks out potential business on a regular basis, so there are always balls in the air. When meeting potential clients, he says, "I like to sit with them and hear their problems and come up with potential solutions, rather than recite my own résumé."

The son of Sri Lankan immigrants (both doctors), Jegasothy says most of his clients have become his friends over time. "It's more than the client-attorney relationship," he adds. "And—knock on wood—mixing friendship with business has never been problematic for me. They always rely on me for advice, whether it's what they want to hear or not."



## ALLEGRA J. LAWRENCE-HARDY

Partner  
Sutherland Asbill & Brennan  
LLP  
Business and Commercial  
Litigation  
Atlanta, Ga.  
Years Practicing: 18

Allegra Lawrence-Hardy has had the same business phone number her entire career. “I joined Sutherland when I finished my judicial clerkship for Judge Black on the Eleventh Circuit. As a young lawyer, I had wonderful mentors who encouraged me to spend as much time as I could with my clients to understand their business concerns. I still represent some of those same clients today.”

She also lives in the same neighborhood as the house where she grew up in Atlanta. The daughter of successful professionals, she was encouraged to achieve academically and professionally. “All of the women in my family attended Spelman College, so that was an easy choice for me. When I entered Yale Law School, my sister was already attending graduate school at MIT and was headed to Harvard as a post-doc. My parents set the bar very high.”

As a partner at Sutherland, Lawrence-Hardy co-heads both the business litigation team and the labor and employment team. She also is a member of the firm’s management committee. She credits her rainmaking success to her focus on understanding her clients’ businesses. “Really knowing the business is the best way I can give comprehensive advice. And I’m more interested in serving as a trusted, continuing advisor than giving an ivory tower answer to a particular question. Knowing their business allows me to understand my clients’ needs and take them into consideration when developing an ongoing legal strategy.

“I like to get on a plane and go to clients, to get out and walk the manufacturing floor, to really understand the technology,” she adds. “The business piece impacts a great deal of the legal strategy. Every good relationship requires an investment.”



## SALIMA A. MERANI, PhD

Partner  
Knobbe, Martens, Olson &  
Bear LLP  
Intellectual Property  
Orange County, Calif.  
Years Practicing: 14

An IP partner in Knobbe Marten’s Orange County office, Salima Merani divides her time representing startup companies and venture capital firms. Because her clients are primarily in the health care and wellness field, Salima leverages her technical background daily. “It is a thrill to be able to speak an inventor’s language when developing patent strategy; it is incredibly rewarding.”

Merani believes that excellent work, high-level strategy, responsive-

ness and commitment will sell itself. “Although I am an intellectual property lawyer,” she says, “I also focus on understanding the client’s overall business and what our firm can do to add value. As a result, most of my new clients come from referrals from former or existing clients. I sometimes get referrals from lawyers and CEOs to whom I have been adverse in the past. I take that as a great compliment.”

Passion, hard work and a great team make rainmaking possible. The elements combined, she says, are the key to her career. Merani also credits the meritocratic environment of her firm as an essential foundation for rainmaking.

“We were immigrants, and like many immigrants, education was of paramount importance,” says Merani, who duly obliged her Indian born parents’ expectations. She was awarded a doctorate in neuroscience after completing her undergraduate degree in genetics at McGill University in Montreal and subsequently earned her law degree at Berkeley. Merani’s first legal job was as a summer intern at Knobbe Martens—the same firm she is with today. “As a summer intern,” says Merani, “I realized I had found a firm with an uncompromising dedication to entrepreneurship, excellence and encouragement, so I had no reason to look elsewhere.”

## FUSAE NARA

Partner  
Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP  
Litigation  
New York, N.Y.  
Years Practicing: 21



Before coming to the U.S., Fusae Nara, a rainmaking partner in Pillsbury’s Manhattan office, worked as an unlicensed lawyer for a corporation in her native Japan. Nara explains that the number of licensed lawyers in Japan is small compared to the U.S. Her situation was good, but Nara wanted to take her knowledge of Japan’s legal culture and go to work for an American firm representing Japanese companies.

So Nara packed up and moved to the U.S., earned a JD at Hofstra University and subsequently joined a firm where she inherited a book of business from her mentor. For seven years, Nara worked with him representing Japanese companies. When he unexpectedly died from a massive heart attack, his business went directly to Nara with the firm’s full support. Consequently, she had some business before she ever made partner.

“However the work comes to you, you still must prove your skillset and commitment. I had to show colleagues that I was for real, willing to work as hard as it takes to get things done.”

Today, Nara represents Japanese companies in complex litigation and multiplied the business over the past decade. “When I first started, my clients liked that I was Japanese but not that I was young and female. Initially, it was difficult for me to be taken seriously by the Japanese businessmen I encountered. But after I proved myself and they overcame their initial resistance, they remained loyal. I’ve had many of the same clients my entire career.”

## JAMES J. OH

Partner  
Littler

Chicago, Ill.

Class Actions

Years Practicing: **22**



**Early on, James Oh** learned an enduring lesson in rainmaking when the merged firm where he worked as a young associate imploded. “Those with a book of business landed on their feet. They were writing their own tickets. Those without had a harder time. That experience was a big motivator; it taught me the importance of rainmaking to job security.”

A partner in Littler’s Chicago office, Oh’s practice focuses on representing management in class action and employment litigation of all kinds. In alternating spurts, he concentrates on business development and substantive work. “Both are essential elements,” he says. “Rainmaking isn’t only about getting new clients. It’s also about keeping the ones you already have. And that requires doing excellent work.”

Rainmaking takes guts. Oh recalls a time early in his career when he moved from a large Chicago firm to a boutique employment and labor firm and made a play for a client to come with him. He flew across country to ask the client in person. “It worked. He sent some business my way,” says Oh. “But you never will bat a thousand, and it’s never good to push too hard.”

Oh describes his business development style as being opportunistic and patient at the same time. “Sometimes you need to back off and wait until an opportunity comes up and be confident that the prospective client will contact you after you have made your initial pitch,” he explains. “Ultimately, rainmaking is another word for selling, and the key to selling is having the right product to sell. With a great team, which I have at my firm, it’s a lot easier to make rain.”



## DOUGLAS J. SOROCO

Shareholder

Dunlap Codding

Intellectual Property

Oklahoma City, Okla.

Years Practicing: **18**

**In attaining rainmaker status,** challenges make the best advantages, says Doug Sorocco a shareholder in Dunlap Codding’s Oklahoma City office.

When Sorocco’s wife was offered a graduate position in Oklahoma, he followed, trading a career in familiar Chicago for the unknown.

“Having not grown up or gone to school here, I didn’t know anyone. I had to rely on my national and international friends and contacts, which pushed me to build a broader book of business. Being able to sell a boutique IP practice coming out of Oklahoma on an international stage was a challenge, but I was able to do it.”

Ultimately, the move proved a boon for Sorocco, whose practice area includes intellectual property, technology, licensing, life

sciences and patent law. “Here, I didn’t have to get through 15 committees when I wanted to do something. Instead, I just went direct to the managing partner and they’d let me run with it. The culture is very entrepreneurial, which reflects the values we see in our clients. That culture shines brightly and provides me a point of differentiation and introduction.”

Sorocco was born with spina bifida, a condition that caused paralysis. “Coming out of law school, I lost some jobs because there were firms that didn’t want an attorney with a physical disability representing them. On the other hand, I was chairman of the Spina Bifida Association of America at a young age. The way I see it, getting up and making a statement in front of an FDA panel or providing testimony to Congress isn’t so different from pitching an RFP—it’s advocacy in different clothing. Overall, my disability taught me the value of empathy, the touchstone for all aspects of my career.”

## LIISA M. THOMAS

Partner

Winston & Strawn LLP

Privacy and Data Security

Chicago, Ill.

Years Practicing: **18**



**The key to building** a book of business is finding how you can help your clients, says Liisa Thomas, a

rainmaking partner in Winston & Strawn’s Chicago office. “We are in the service industry; we need to deliver to clients things that they need.” On her road to becoming a rainmaker, she says, she “worked at finding what clients needed and making sure I delivered it. If there was no market for the things I did, I wouldn’t have succeeded at being a rainmaker.”

Thomas began her career at a small trademark litigation boutique firm. After two years, she knew that full-time litigation was not for her. So she changed firms and worked on finding an area of expertise.

“At the time, nobody wanted to deal with the internet. So I got to do all the online enforcement work. That led me to privacy, which I really liked,” she remembers. “I got great advice from one of the partners I worked with as a young associate. She told me to develop an area of expertise, something that set me apart from everyone else in the group, something no one else was doing, but tied into and related to the rest of the work we did. She suggested picking something in which I had a passion. I picked privacy.” Today, Thomas is the chair of the firm’s privacy and data security practice, an area that didn’t exist when she started her career.

In business development, high-quality work and sustaining relationships are a given, says Thomas. “What I try to do to set myself apart is to truly listen to my clients and their underlying business needs. I feel I have succeeded if I can provide high-quality legal advice that helps my clients achieve their goals.” To Thomas, this is the key to having a successful practice and to being a rainmaker.

Finding a niche sent Thomas on her way to rainmaking. She advises, “Find something that sets you apart and what you really enjoy. Otherwise, you’ll get burned out and not be in the profession in a few years.”

## ANITA VARMA

Partner

Ropes & Gray LLP  
Intellectual Property  
Boston, Mass.

Years Practicing: **18**



For Anita Varma, rainmaking comes down to client service. “If you jump through hoops to position a client for success, they will stick with you. They’ll refer you to other clients. If you work with in-house lawyers, when they change jobs they will come back to you.”

As co-head of Ropes & Gray Intellectual Property Rights Management Practice, Varma focuses her practice on developing, analyzing and managing patent portfolios in diverse areas of technology for life sciences companies. She counsels clients on transactional matters in connection with financial investments, M&A and collaborations. Varma combines her patent experience with an understanding of regulatory exclusivities to help clients evaluate target portfolios and conduct worldwide due diligence assessments. “Early in my career I asked myself, ‘What do you want to be known for?’. In a big space like patents, it’s very important to create a niche. I decided on due diligence and opinion, two areas that I’ve always enjoyed, and I built on that. It’s really helped in putting together a successful book of business.”

Prior to law school, Varma, who was born in the U.S. but spent most of her youth in India, worked as a patent officer at the United States Patent and Trademark Office. During her time there, she enjoyed the science but fell in love with the legal aspects, prompting her to earn a law degree. Today she is also UK solicitor, which qualifies her to practice before the European Patent Office. “The world is shrinking. When I started my career, my work was U.S.-centric. That’s no longer the case.”

Varma describes her leadership style as very hands-on. “I work with a big team of technical advisors and associates, but ultimately the responsibility is mine. I need to know everything that’s happening. My clients expect it.”



## JOSHUA D. WAYSER

Managing Partner

Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP  
Litigation and Dispute  
Resolution

Los Angeles, Calif.

Years Practicing: **26**

“Rainmaker definitely describes me,” says Joshua Wayser, managing partner in Katten’s Los Angeles office. “It’s a nice title to have, but it’s also pressure. It means you have to maintain business, keep people busy and help your firm.”

Wayser represents financial institutions in a wide range of litigation, focusing on real estate and other assets, and deals with a wide array of issues and concerns faced by financial institutions and hedge funds.

As a litigator, he is accustomed to being in court, but Wayser says his greatest strength is counseling clients on complex matters. “This doesn’t always mean winning in litigation. The goal is to make a client look their very best, and sometimes that means stepping away from a controversy. To achieve this, you have to get very granular. You really need to understand your client’s business.”

Understanding business is also invaluable in sustaining rainmaking status, he adds. In advising clients, many of whom he’s represented for 20 years, Wayser really needs to know how their business ticks. Only then can he instruct them on the best way to proceed or how to strengthen their bottom line.

Wayser and his husband have six adopted children ages 14 and younger. “It’s been interesting. Before the kids, I was the smart gay lawyer. Now, I’m the smart gay lawyer with kids. I’ve become concerned with public schools, and you can find me at Little League games on weekends. Having children has built bridges with my straight colleagues who have children and also opened up new opportunities for networking and business development. That’s something I never expected.”

## RAFAEL X. ZAHRALDDIN

Shareholder and Director

Elliott Greenleaf

Wilmington, Del.

Years practicing: **15**



Rafael Zahralddin’s road to rainmaking was not typical. After graduating from Widener University, he went on to receive his LLM in international and comparative law from Georgetown University Law Center. There, he spent a year as a senior writing fellow, providing academic support to the 200–300 foreign lawyers in the common law studies LLM program, then spent several years as an assistant and then associate law professor at Chapman University in Orange, Calif. “Having been a professor provides me with a unique network,” says Zahralddin, a founding shareholder of Elliott Greenleaf’s Delaware office and its first managing shareholder. “There are four or five years of students who I taught and mentored. Today, you can find them in-house and other places. They’re all sources of businesses opportunities.”

As chair of the firm’s national commercial bankruptcy and restructuring practice, he deals with bankruptcy, litigation and cross-border issues. Being resident in his firm’s Delaware office rounds out his practice with entity formation, opinion letters, corporate litigation and intellectual property litigation.

“Our business development model is that partners work during the day, and in the evenings we spend time engaged in the community,” Zahralddin explains. “When people see you demonstrating your leadership skills on a board or coaching their kids, they may be likely to trust you handling their legal matters, too.”

With rainmaking comes responsibility, honed by the fact that he and several colleagues in the Delaware office are Six Sigma Greenbelts. “When someone hires the firm, they know they’re hiring me, too. We believe that clients get better value when a partner works closely and actively with associates and paralegals. There’s a better product and at the end of the day, a better bottom line.” **D&B**