



Steven G. Mlenak

Partner, Co-Chair, Redevelopment & Land Use Department
Greenbaum, Rowe, Smith & Davis LLP
Roseland, Essex County

What is your greatest contribution to the success of your company/clients?

I often feel my greatest strength as a lawyer comes from being raised in a family of small business owners, when I witnessed first-hand the value of each dollar a business owner spends. I understand that clients need me to make the best deals, not “over-lawyer” them. By investing myself in their objectives, I seek to earn their trust as a valued member of their team.

What was a career challenge you overcame? My career began as a community association lawyer representing common interest communities throughout New Jersey, and I still enjoy a significant practice in that specialized legal niche. I set my sights on broadening my practice scope to encompass redevelopment after being exposed to that work as an associate. Through the support of my firm, including exposure to top-notch mentoring, I was able to meet that challenge and establish myself as a well-skilled and respected redevelopment lawyer in a crowded field of first-rate competitors.

What inspires you to continue in your current profession? I love that nearly all my work is focused on building. Whether it is building infrastructure for the economy to grow, housing for people to live, industrial projects that improve the speed and efficiency with which we receive goods, or simply helping people get the zoning they need to start a small business, my work helps to build communities. Setting financial reasons aside, I cherish the opportunities I continue to have to work with truly inspiring people committed to improving our communities and our state for future generations.

Laurie Newmark

Member
Townsend Tomaio and Newmark, LLC
Whippany, Morris County



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On April 1, 2009, I opened TTN with my two partners. We left a large firm so we could practice family law consistent with our core values. Namely, to provide quality representation in a respectful team atmosphere without focus on quantity or numbers. My contribution to the firm has been my leadership and steady hand. With hard work and careful planning we have grown to a highly successful 30-plus employee family law firm.

How has your role as a “Leader in Law” evolved over the years? I have been practicing law for 24 years and during that time my leadership role in the law has evolved. The type of case I handle has become more complex. I have numerous published and unpublished court decisions. I am also a mediator. Equally important, however, I serve as a mentor for the younger lawyers in my firm. I managed to excel while raising two children. Figuring out work-life balance and priorities was a challenge, and I am happy to share my experiences and provide guidance to younger lawyers.

What do you know now that you wish you’d known earlier in your career? Flexibility and change are two main ingredients for a successful business. A thriving business must have both an original foundation but also the ability to quickly pivot and adapt to unforeseen and changing circumstances. As our business matured, we were at times resistant to change and realize now that some opportunities were potentially lost. We now embrace new situations and adapt as needed to best serve our law firm.



Steven Nudelman

Partner and Chair, Construction Contracting & Risk Management Practice Group
Greenbaum, Rowe, Smith & Davis LLP
Red Bank, Monmouth County

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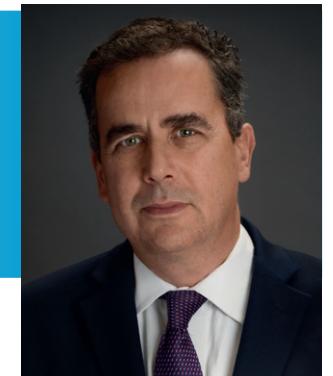
My greatest contribution is definitely my ability to provide specialized knowledge, usually on a specific project basis, due to my focus on construction law in the public and private sectors for over 25 years. Clients receive prompt, dedicated legal guidance, delivered in a cost-conscious manner. They understand I am not their trusted business advisor; I am their trusted construction law advisor. Clients appreciate the targeted value I add to their construction projects.

What do you know now that you wish you’d known earlier in your career? There are ways to grow in the legal profession other than by researching, writing and advocating for clients. This includes active participation in bar associations and specialty trade groups. While many people join such organizations, few actively participate, leaving terrific opportunities for the young lawyer. The practice of law is about communication; the more chances you get to communicate, the better a lawyer you become.

How has your role as a “Leader in Law” evolved over the years? My role evolved through writing and speaking over the years. Initially, I actively sought out such opportunities, but now these opportunities frequently seek me! My exposure increased after serving as an officer of the NJSBA’s Construction Law Section. I was then elected a Charter Fellow of the Construction Lawyers Society of America. I now accept dozens of invitations to write and speak on construction law topics to local and national audiences.

Kevin O’Connor

Shareholder
Peckar & Abramson, P.C.
River Edge, Bergen County



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I came into the law through a non-traditional channel—the U.S. military. After law school, I sought to learn as many areas of the law I could to improve my skillset. My real-life experiences have given me a leg up on issue spotting, and I developed strong tactical skills, often seeing a case as a game of chess. I also bring a practical spirit to the work I do, always trying to find out what the right result would be at the inception of a case, and keeping laser focused on that target.

How has your role as a “Leader in Law” evolved over the years? I have gradually seen my role evolve from being the “go to” guy to get a case done, in other words to work up a file and do all of the hands-on things that are done from soup to nuts, to someone who is actively mentoring and supervising a team of great people to do it exactly the way I learned to do it, freeing me up to be consulted at a higher level on all manner of legal issues that come up for our clients.

What inspires you to continue in your current profession? I am often called to represent people in their worst times, in many cases it is businesspeople who are fighting for their lives, whether it be a lawsuit between themselves and a co-shareholder or partner, or an action by the government claiming wrongdoing. I have gotten a great deal of satisfaction out of helping people find the right solution for them. There is no greater satisfaction in this career than finding solutions that allow people to return to their business lives and to thrive.