

## Female Powerbrokers Q&A: Butler Snow's Christy Jones



*Law360, New York (May 13, 2014, 1:17 PM ET)* -- Christy D. Jones is a member of the pharmaceutical, medical device and health care industry team at Butler Snow LLP in Ridgeland, Mississippi. She focuses her practice on drug and medical device, product liability law and mass torts. During her more than 30 years of trial experience, Jones has served as national trial counsel representing various corporations and has tried cases throughout the United States. In many of these instances, she has served as lead counsel in bellwether trials. Jones is a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers and is a past regent of Region 6. She is also a member of the International Academy of Trial Lawyers and the American Board of Trial Advocates. Jones was the 2012 recipient of the Mississippi Bar

Foundation's Professionalism Award.

### **Q: How did you break into what many consider to be an old boys' network?**

A: I am fortunate to be a partner at Butler Snow, which has a philosophy that clients are firm clients, not clients of individual lawyers, and there is a long tradition of involving young lawyers with clients and transitioning work appropriately. Also, the firm strongly believes in diversity and that diverse views strongly benefit our clients, so early in my career, I was given significant opportunities to interact with clients at all levels, including doing work in Scotland as a baby lawyer. My senior partner and mentor also gave me significant responsibilities in taking depositions and trials early on in my career; it helped that several of the major cases I was involved with included contraceptive drugs which were particularly appropriate for involvement of women lawyers.

### **Q: What are the challenges of being a woman at a senior level within a law firm?**

A: There are no unique challenges in my firm beyond the significant responsibilities of providing examples, encouragement and mentoring to young lawyers and transitioning the trial practice to others. It is my goal to prepare young lawyers, both men and women, to understand and exceed the needs of our clients.

**Q: Describe a time you encountered sexism in your career and tell us how you handled it.**

A: I have been fortunate to encounter little sexism. In the one case where confronted with such an attitude by a judge, I chose to defer, prove to the court that I was knowledgeable and that he could rely upon my representations, and essentially earn his respect. I thought the judge was extremely dismissive of me and he tried to belittle me in front of a courtroom full of more senior male lawyers. Whether that was purely because I was a woman, or he simply had other issues he was dealing with, I was clearly not part of his circle of “good old boys”; in my experiences with him, he certainly seemed to have a poor attitude toward most women in his courtroom. Suffice it to say, I had to try a month-long case in his courtroom to change his opinion. Today his attitude is completely different.

**Q: What advice would you give to an aspiring female attorney?**

A: I would tell them to try to exceed the expectations of the clients with whom they represent and to work hard, treat others professionally, with integrity and respect, and to aspire to excellence. I would also tell them that collaboration within a firm and with other law firms, can be key to building a successful practice.

**Q: What advice would you give to a law firm looking to increase the number of women in its partner ranks?**

A: I think firms need to have a determined effort to establish an atmosphere where women are given equal opportunity to succeed. Firms should also make a conscientious effort to ensure that women have a seat at the table, are in key leadership positions and that they are fairly compensated and recognized. Firms who understand that diverse teams and diverse points of view are important are those firms who are clearly valued by clients. When everyone agrees and simply thinks alike, then someone is unnecessary. When problem-solving, some of the best ideas come out of diverse points of view.

**Q: Outside your firm, name an attorney you admire and tell us why.**

A: Lisbeth Warren, in-house counsel for Johnson & Johnson, is a marvelous lawyer, who is supportive of outside trial counsel, is an active participant in trial preparation with incredibly good judgment, who has provided many, many opportunities to both women and young lawyers.

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