

PDXbizwomen
COALITION

CHRISTINE L. HEIN

MEMBER PROFILE



MANAGING PARTNER, RING BENDER LLP

How did you come into the role you are in now? I worked my way up from the bottom! I was hired by my current partners over 15 years ago when I was a brand new lawyer and had just moved to Portland. Ten years ago they invited me to join them in founding our own boutique environmental and natural resources law firm, Ring Bender. As with any start-up, it took several years for us to work out the business model. I learned all that I could about firm management. My partners ultimately asked me to become the firm's managing partner 5 years ago. In this role I learn something new every day and have the privilege of leading a fantastic team.

As a woman, what challenges were you faced with when stepping into this leadership role? How did you overcome them? The biggest challenge for me has been balancing a very busy practice, my management duties, and my family life. My husband, James, is also a law partner (in the Business Group at Tonkon Torp) and we have three young children (currently ages 4, 6 and 8). The logistics of making sure that deadlines are met and that we have quality time with the kids can be very difficult, especially when the pandemic hit. I don't know that I have overcome this challenge yet, but it is a work in progress. I have become much more comfortable with setting boundaries and being honest when I am struggling and need help, which can be scary when you are in a service

profession like ours. The pandemic, as horrible as it was, resulted in more flexible ideas about the workplace. I think that is a positive development for all employees, particularly those with kids. Another challenge I have faced is learning to be more assertive and direct. I spend a lot of time in my current position checking in with my partners and other team members and managing interpersonal relationships and workflow quietly in the background. I dislike conflict and confrontation. I have discovered, however, that there can be a lot of value in engaging in open conversation about problems and differing viewpoints.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to grow in their career? The single biggest piece of advice I have is to build a solid support network. Throughout my career I have gone out of my way to join organizations and network with interesting people. You are never too old or advanced in your career to identify new mentors and promoters - or to fill that role for younger folks. I'm a member of a managing partners roundtable with leaders from other local law firms. Not only is it personally fulfilling, but for me, having that network has been critical to successfully running our firm. I could not have navigated all the business challenges of COVID without the support and perspective of the other managing partners in our group.

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