

How I Made Partner: 'Relationship-Building, Visibility and Sound Judgment,' Says Mitch Schuster of Meister Seelig & Schuster

By Law.com Staff

August 14, 2026

Mitchell Schuster, 62, Partner at Meister Seelig & Schuster, New York, New York

Job title(s): Administrative partner; chair, litigation department; chair, crisis management

Practice area(s): Crisis management and litigation department

Law school and year of graduation: The Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University, 1989

The following has been edited for style.

How long have you been at the firm?

26 years in July

What was your criteria in selecting your current firm?

They selected me. They were looking for an attorney with actual trial experience to help train their commercial litigators.

Were you an associate at another firm before joining your present firm? If so, which one and how long were you there?

I was a partner at a small personal injury firm. It was called DiJoseph Portegello & Schuster.

What do you think was the deciding point for the firm in making you name partner? Was it your performance on a specific case? A personality trait? Making connections with the right people?

I don't think there is ever just one deciding factor, and in my case it wasn't tied to a single



Courtesy photo

Mitch Schuster of Meister Seelig & Schuster.

matter or moment. It was really the accumulation of consistent performance over time, the ability to handle high-pressure matters effectively, earn client trust, and contribute meaningfully to the growth and reputation of the practice and firm.

I also think judgment and reliability played a major role. Partnership is ultimately about trust and being someone the firm and its clients want to rely on long-term.

Who had or has the greatest influence in your career and why?

My father, who was not a lawyer, taught me how to assess credibility and the importance of respecting people from all walks of life, which I believe helped make me a better trial lawyer. My best friend and partner Mark Seelig provided guidance and support to help me develop a crisis

management practice when few firms focused on that as a practice area. His vision and belief in my abilities contributed greatly to my expansion into that area.

What advice would you give an associate who wants to make partner?

The associates who ultimately make partner are the ones who understand early that being a great lawyer is only part of the equation. Strong legal work is the baseline, but what really separates future partners is judgment, reliability, and the ability to build trust, both internally and with clients.

Be the person that partners and clients can depend on under pressure. Anticipate issues before they arise, communicate clearly, and take ownership of your matters. Learn not just how to execute assignments, but why strategic decisions are being made.

I would also encourage associates to develop a genuine interest in business development earlier than they think they need to. Building relationships, cultivating a professional reputation, and becoming someone people want to work with are critical to long-term growth.

Finally, approach your career with patience and consistency. Partnership is rarely the result of one great year, it is earned through sustained excellence, professionalism, and the confidence that clients and colleagues place in you over time.

When it comes to career planning and navigating inside a law firm, in your opinion, what's the most common mistake you see other attorneys making?

One of the most common mistakes attorneys make is focusing exclusively on the work directly in front of them without thinking strategically about their long-term career. Strong legal skills are essential, but advancement inside a law firm also requires relationship-building, visibility,

sound judgment, and an understanding of the business side of the practice.

I also see attorneys underestimate the importance of communication and responsiveness. Reputation is built over time through consistency, professionalism, and how you make clients and colleagues feel in high-pressure situations.

The attorneys who tend to succeed are the ones who are intentional about their development, seek out opportunities, and understand that a successful legal career is built both on excellent work and trusted relationships.

What challenges, if any, did you face or have to overcome in your career path and what was the lesson learned? How did it affect or influence your career?

Given that I did not graduate from a top tier law school or work at one of the larger firms upon graduation may have caused adversaries to underestimate me. I carried it as a chip on my shoulder, which ultimately caused me to outwork those who I came across. There is no substitute for hard work and no excuse for letting your adversary outwork you.

Knowing what you know now about your career path, what advice would you give to your younger self?

I would tell my younger self to focus less on trying to have every step of my career perfectly mapped out and more on consistently developing strong skills, relationships, and judgment. Some of the most meaningful opportunities in my career came from staying open-minded, being dependable, and saying yes to challenging situations that pushed me outside my comfort zone.

I'd also emphasize the importance of patience. In this profession, reputations and careers are built over time through consistency, and how you handle difficult moments. Sometimes the most important lessons come from listening and

watching others. Learn what works and what does not work.

Most importantly, I would remind myself that relationships matter tremendously, the legal profession is built on trust, and the way you treat clients, colleagues, and opposing counsel will follow you throughout your career.

How do you utilize technology to benefit the firm/practice and/or business development?

Technology plays a significant role in both my practice and business development efforts, particularly given the nature of crisis management and high-profile litigation. In many matters involving athletes, entertainers, and public figures, information moves instantly, so we utilize technology to monitor media coverage, track digital narratives, and respond quickly when reputational issues arise.

We also leverage digital communication platforms to stay connected with clients in real time, often across multiple states and time zones, which is critical in fast-moving matters. From a business development standpoint, strategic use of media, online visibility, podcasts, interviews, and digital publications have become increasingly important in building credibility and maintaining relationships within the sports, entertainment, and business communities.

Technology has also expanded the reach of the firm nationally as we continue to grow our crisis management and litigation practices across markets like New York, Los Angeles and Nashville.

How would you describe your work mindset?

I would describe my work mindset as strategic, responsive, and solutions-oriented. Many of the matters I handle involve high stakes, significant pressure, and reputational sensitivity, so I believe

it's important to stay calm, think several steps ahead, and remain focused on achieving the best possible outcome for the client. There is never a one-size-fits-all to a crisis situation so I can never be complacent and must always be ready for the next shoe to drop.

I also approach my practice with a strong sense of responsibility and responsiveness. Clients often come to us during challenging moments, and they need counsel they can trust not only for legal guidance, but for sound judgment and steady communication.

Do you have any advice for improving work-life balance or promoting mental wellness to avoid burnout and maintain your career momentum?

Maintaining balance starts with being intentional about protecting your time and prioritizing what is truly important. Burnout often happens when attorneys operate in a constant reactive mode without creating space to reset and recharge.

Having said that, I do not necessarily practice what I preach. Given that a large part of my practice involves dealing with crisis situations that do not always happen during normal working hours, I am always on and available for a client or advisor who needs my services. I have taken calls in the early hours from clients in distress either domestically or abroad. It does result in many sleepless nights, but it comes with the territory.

If you participate in firm or industry initiatives, please mention the initiatives you are working on as well as the impact you hope to achieve.

I helped institute the firm's Lunch & Learn series to help share business development skills with attorneys who have a desire to become generators.