

PUBLICATION

Common Ground

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Baker Donelson Associate Cassandra Horton connected recently with Shareholder and Chair of the Firm's Corporate Group Sebastian Meis to explore areas of common ground they share across their different roles and backgrounds.

Cassandra: I lateralled to Baker Donelson in September 2023. One thing I quickly learned and appreciated about the Firm was the conscious efforts my colleagues made to be kind and build community among everyone in the Firm. I had the opportunity early on to meet colleagues in other offices. One such colleague was Sebastian Meis, a shareholder in Baker Donelson's Atlanta office. Sebastian made the time to meet with me while I was in town for a conference. Our conversation was inspiring and left a lasting impression on me, so much so that when I was presented with the opportunity to co-write this article, Sebastian was the first person to come to mind. Although he and I come from very different cultural backgrounds, we did have commonalities such as spending time in Germany and in Baltimore. Our discussion below provides insights into our thoughts and experiences on perseverance and overcoming adversity.

Cassandr a: It was great getting to chat with you in Atlanta and hearing about your professional and personal experiences. When I think back on how I arrived to where I am today, I am grateful that I have not let the many challenges I have faced deter me. Dare I say, I persevered. What does "perseverance" mean to you?

Sebastian: To me, "perseverance" means giving up is not an option. My mother was the one who always reminded me of what it takes to persevere growing up. Who has been influential in your life teaching you or reminding you to persevere?

Cassandr a: For me, it was my father. When I met a challenge, he would encourage me to face it head-on and not give up. Speaking of challenges, can you tell me about a challenge or adversity that you have faced in your professional life, and how you overcame it?

Sebastian: When I was a mid-level associate (maybe in my fourth or fifth year), I was thinking about leaving my previous law firm to go in-house. While this would have been an easy option, I instead decided to "reinvent" myself by focusing on strategic business development, growing a network of referral sources, and persevering.

Have you experienced challenges or adversity in your career as an attorney? If so, did you try to deal with them yourself or did you reach out to other people within or outside of the Firm to

explore solutions?

Cassandr a: It is funny, I think many associates, me included, can relate to wanting to switch gears once we hit our fourth or fifth year at a firm. Regarding your question, I tend to do both. I will try to deal with the challenge on my own, but I will not hesitate to reach out to others to explore solutions. For example, due to some struggles while preparing for the California bar and working at a law firm, I sometimes felt like an imposter. However, during the pandemic, I decided to move back to the D.C. area and passed the bar thanks to faith and family support. I am grateful for the support I received and my professional journey, which has helped restore my confidence.

What motivates you to continue when facing a challenge/adversity?

Sebastian: Challenges and adversity motivate me because they remind me of my childhood. Growing up in a small town in Germany with a Japanese mother, I learned at an early age to face challenges or adversity head-on. The process of analyzing challenges or adversity and developing solutions can be extremely rewarding, especially when helping others. br />

Cassandr a: Absolutely agree! My personal and professional community have seen things in me that I have not seen in myself. When I face challenges or adversity, I appreciate the support and encouragement to "shake it off" and keep going.

Casandra: My conversation with Sebastian showed me that while we may have cultural differences, we actually have more in common than we may initially have realized. We've both experienced different challenges in our lives and careers and have used the support of our community as well as a "giving up is not an option" mindset to work and achieve our goals.