

THE NextGen

These minds will help shape the Valley's legal world

The 21 Valley attorneys the Phoenix Business Journal is recognizing as rising stars in their fields have a lot in common.

Whether they work in commercial litigation, real estate or health law or personal injury, these legal professionals are already making their mark in the Valley. But they have bigger goals on their career bucket lists.

The majority attended state universities to earn their law degrees. And all of them had teachers or family members to inspire them to enter the legal field or push them along the way.

And, of course, at least a couple named "To Kill a Mockingbird" as their favorite legal book or movie.

Honorees were chosen based on their contributions to their firms and their potential to shape the industry, and the Valley's legal world, moving forward.

Here are the rising stars in law that you should know in 2021.

- Erin Edgemon



A. DANIEL COUMIDES
Gust Rosenfeld
Associate

Age: 34

Primary practice area: Insurance litigation

Law school: University of Arizona

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? Mike Frazelle, one of my first mentors in the legal profession, inspired me to practice insurance defense and commercial litigation. He showed me how much fun it can be to work across multiple practice areas and help resolve a wide variety of legal issues.

What advice do you have for other young lawyers? My advice for other young lawyers is to accept any challenge presented to you. The best way to learn how to do something is to do it yourself.

What's the hot topic in your practice area? The defense of Covid-19 related claims and insurance coverage for such claims have quickly become hot topics.

What's your biggest accomplishment so far? The most rewarding part of my career has been guiding clients through several trials. The process of going through a trial with a client allows you to develop strong connections. It also provides you an appreciation of the privilege of representing people's legal interests.

What are your career goals? Or what is on your career bucket list? I strive to continue to develop as an attorney, effectively represent my clients, and expand my practice with Gust Rosenfeld. I also look forward to teaching and mentoring future attorneys.

What's your favorite legal show, movie or book? "A Time To Kill"



HANNAH PORTER
Gallagher & Kennedy
Shareholder

Age: 32

Primary practice area: Litigation and public bidding and procurement

Law School: Brigham Young University

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? I knew before I started law school that I wanted to do litigation. I've always enjoyed a good argument, and those times when you get to demonstrate to the judge or jury why your client should prevail are invigorating!

What advice do you have for other young lawyers? Timely, regular communication with clients is vital to make sure that they understand everything that is happening and the typical timelines.

What's the hot topic in your practice area? Scope of discovery obligations to produce and preserve electronic information.

What's your biggest accomplishment so far? My most significant achievement is winning a case before the Arizona Supreme Court, where I did most of the briefing.

What are your career goals? Or what is on your career bucket list? Argue an appeal at the 9th Circuit and first chair at a major trial.

What's your favorite legal show, movie, or book? "Better Call Saul"



IAN NESTERUK
Dickinson Wright
Member

Age: 34

Primary practice area: Immigration law

Law school: Arizona State University

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? My partner and mentor, Lisa Duran, inspired me to enter my practice area. Lisa explained the demand for business immigration attorneys, and the values of having a niche legal practice. Her practice was intriguing, and it was clear that she enjoyed what she was doing.

What advice do you have for other young lawyers? Differentiate yourself by becoming an expert in a niche area of the law.

What's the hot topic in your practice area? There are too many to count - international travel restrictions, the resumption of routine visa services at embassies and consulates around the world, and potential changes to the H-1B lottery selection process are among the hottest topics.

What's your biggest accomplishment so far? My biggest accomplishment so far was being elected a member at Dickinson Wright in 2019.

What are your career goals? My career goals involve learning new languages and industries in order to expand the reach of my business immigration practice. Ultimately, my goal is to be a leader in the field.

What's your favorite legal show, movie or book? "To Kill a Mockingbird"

RAISING THE BAR



KRISTINE BEAUDOIN
Perkins Coie | Counsel

Age: 32
Primary practice area: Commercial litigation
Law school: Duke University

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? I can't remember a time when I didn't plan to become a lawyer, so I honestly don't know what sparked that initial idea. When I first started practicing, however, I quickly realized that my favorite part of lawyering is picking apart the facts in each case. For that reason, my practice spans both litigation and investigations, and I enjoy getting to the bottom of what's happening in both scenarios.

What advice do you have for other young lawyers? Presentation goes a long way toward establishing trust with your audience, whether co-workers, clients or the court. Sloppy-looking work, however informal the assignment, puts your readers in the wrong mindset before they even read what you wrote. The little details matter more than you think they do.

What's the hot topic in your practice area? Like with many practice areas, we have been talking a lot about how to operate remotely. For example, when litigating in person isn't possible, how do you use technology to present your best case to the judge, connect with clients and conduct meaningful depositions?

What's your biggest accomplishment so far? My biggest legal accomplishment was when a judge ruled from the bench in my client's favor after hearing oral argument on my summary judgment motion.

What's your favorite legal show, movie or book? I have always avoided legal media as much as possible. I get enough of it at work. Especially during the pandemic when my office and home are one and the same, I want the media I'm consuming to be as different as possible from what I spend all day doing.



DOMINICK SAN ANGELO
Gallagher & Kennedy | Associate

Age: 31
Primary practice area: Business law and transactions
Law school: Duke University

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? When I was a young boy, I had two main professional idols: Michael Jordan, who played guard for the Chicago Bulls, and my mother, Laurie San Angelo, an attorney at the time and is now a Superior Court Judge in Pima County. Over time, I realized that getting paid to play sports would not be a real career option for me, so I chose Plan B and started working towards becoming a lawyer like Mom. I picked a different practice area so that it wouldn't be so obvious that I could never be as amazing an attorney as she.

What's the hot topic in your practice area? I'd call it "embracing the froth." 2020 was a weird year, and 2021 is shaping up to be a similarly weird year, with companies either desperately trying to survive or watching their valuations go parabolic—and sometimes both. Owners of companies were eager to take advantage of this strange set of market conditions through M&A and/or capital raising in the second half of 2020, and I expect this to continue in the first half of this year so long as fiscal and monetary policy remains as accommodative as it has been (or more so).

What are your career goals? As someone who graduated from law school with six figures worth of student debt, I'd like to one day be able to say that I don't practice law for the paycheck. But mostly, I want to be remembered as someone you can count on to give you good advice.

What's your favorite legal show, movie, or book? "The Wire" is the best show of all time.



SAMAN GOLESTAN
City of Peoria | Assistant city attorney

Age: 32
Primary practice area: Civil litigation
Law school: Arizona State University

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? My grandparents were big inspirations. My grandfather was a public servant and government lawyer. My grandmother was one of seven women in her medical school class in the 1950s. My parents lived through a revolution and came here from a place without an independent judiciary and very few political rights. All of that animated my decision to pursue election and employment law.

What's the hot topic in your practice area? In election law, whether the new Congress will re-invigorate the heart of the Voting Rights Act in response to the Shelby County v. Holder decision from 2012. The House passed an amended VRA last year. The VRA amendment will likely be back this year, so all eyes will be on the Senate. In employment law, how government and voters will address ongoing independent contractor issues in the app-based gig economy.

What's your biggest accomplishment so far? In my prior private practice, I helped defend Arizona voters' right of initiative to make laws directly and independently without the legislature. In 2016, I successfully defended the minimum wage and paid sick leave initiative, keeping it on the ballot. The voters approved and nearly one million Arizonans got a pay raise. Some got paid sick leave for the first time. In 2018, I successfully defended the clean energy initiative, keeping it on the ballot. Even though the initiative did not pass, saving the initiative allowed voters to decide. In my first year and a half working as a government attorney in civil litigation, I am happy to say I had an undefeated record.

What's your favorite legal show, movie or book? The original "12 Angry Men" remains a favorite of mine.



DWAYNE BURNS
Davis Miles McGuire Gardner | Associate

Age: 35
Primary practice area: Personal injury
Law school: Arizona Summit Law School

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? My mother inspired me to enter the legal profession. My mother is a U.S. Army veteran who served for over 20 years. When I was young, she would tell me I was a rule follower and objective. She always said I would make a great attorney one day. I used to think it was an impossible task because I grew up extremely poor. One day, my mother came home and said she joined the Army. She wanted a better life for my brother and I, so we moved in with our grandmother while my mother completed basic training and one tour before we could be reunited. While growing up, I watched my mother wake up early for PT, go to work, take care of my brother and I, and make it to our events. Following my dream of becoming an attorney was the only way I could repay her for the sacrifices that she made.

What advice do you have for other young lawyers? I would tell young attorneys to protect their reputation in the legal community. Additionally, I would tell young lawyers to trust the attorneys who are willing to help. Lastly, I would also share that you can accomplish great things in our profession by being professional and respectful with opposing counsel.

What's the hot topic in your practice area? Crash avoidance technology in vehicles is ripe for litigation.

What's your biggest accomplishment so far? Accomplishing my dream of becoming an attorney. Personally, becoming a father.

What are your career goals? To become a partner with Davis Miles McGuire Gardner.

What's your favorite legal show, movie or book? "Goliath"

RAISING THE BAR



MELISSA SOLIZ
Coppersmith Brockelman | Partner

Age: 35
Primary practice area: Health care law
Law school: Arizona State University

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? I met my mentor, Kristen Rosati, about four years into my legal career, when I was struggling to see myself continuing as a litigator. Kristen, a national leader on HIPAA compliance and big data sharing, introduced me to the practice area I love — regulatory compliance with state and federal health information privacy and access laws.

What advice do you have for other young lawyers? Say “yes” to opportunities, even if they don’t look like opportunities at first. That “ask” by a senior partner to read a 1,000-page proposed rule on your own time might be the chance to develop an expertise that turns into the focus of your career.

What’s the hot topic in your practice area? Interoperability, which is the ability to securely exchange electronic health information across different systems without special effort. The health information industry is hard at work meeting new interoperability requirements within existing privacy and security frameworks.

What’s your biggest accomplishment so far? My promotion to partner at Coppersmith Brockelman. I am honored to work in partnership with my mentor and other talented attorneys in our firm.

What are your career goals? I hope to continue to assist stakeholders in Arizona and nationally to improve patient care and public health through secure and confidential exchange and use of health information.

What’s your favorite legal show, movie or book? As a teenager one of my favorite shows was “The Practice.” The strong female characters served as fictional role models for what women could achieve in the legal profession.



COURTNEY BELLER
Fennemore Craig | Director

Age: 35
Primary practice area: Business litigation
Law school: University of Arizona

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? Raphael Lemkin. He was a Polish lawyer best known for coining the word “genocide.” His story helped me understand the power of language and the law and that words alone have significant power.

What advice do you have for other young lawyers? It may be hard but be a little fearless. Whether that is agreeing to take on new tasks that you have never done before or making a pivot into a new area of law, you have to force yourself out of your comfort zone. Large gains are achieved by those willing to take risks, even when they seem daunting.

What’s the hot topic in your practice area? So much of litigation is about physical presence — presence in the courtroom, before a jury, and in depositions. That presence allows us to use the physical power of our bodies to exert influence and to implement strategic decisions based on observed body language. Right now, that in-person interaction is not possible. In addition to the technical and procedural complications we are working through by being unable to interact due to Covid, litigators now have to find new ways use to achieve these goals while on Zoom.

What’s your favorite legal show, movie or book? I prefer shows, movies, books and podcasts about business. That includes “Business Wars on Wondry” and “How I Built This with Guy Raz.” The best part about my job is getting to learn about what entrepreneurs are doing and how ideas can be transformed into real life business that provide jobs for thousands of people. It is very rewarding to help them navigate problems and come out stronger than ever.



KATIE CALLAWAY
Fennemore Craig | Partner

Age: 38
Primary practice area: Estate planning and probate
Law school: Arizona State University

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? My estate planning professor at ASU’s Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law inspired me to become an estate planning attorney. While I have the utmost respect for litigators, I knew early on that my personality was better suited for transactional law. Estate planning was a natural fit because it gives me the opportunity to get to know my clients and their families on a more personal level, which is what I enjoy most about practicing law. At the same time, estate planning is challenging and requires me to keep up with the ever-changing tax laws, so I continuously remain intellectually engaged. My estate planning professor also encouraged me to obtain my LLM in tax law from NYU. He played a significant role in where I am today, and I am truly grateful for his teaching and support.

What’s the hot topic in your practice area? The extent to which the results of the 2020 presidential election will impact tax law, including the federal estate tax exemption amount.

What’s your biggest accomplishment so far? My biggest career accomplishment so far was making partner. One of my biggest personal accomplishments so far was qualifying for the Boston Marathon in 2020.

What are your career goals? I plan to continue to build a solid practice that affords me the opportunity to work with individuals and on matters that I truly enjoy, while maintaining a balance that allows me to spend quality time with my husband and three children. I also plan to continue to use my platform as an attorney in ways that will have a tangible impact on my community.



JEREMY JARRETT
Jennings, Strouss & Salmon | Associate

Age: 34
Primary practice area: Business transactions
Law school: Tulane University

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? While working for sports agents during college, I had the opportunity to meet and work with several attorneys (agents/in-house counsel/other executives) who encouraged me to pursue a career in corporate/business law regardless of the industry. Working with them helped me learn that I had a passion for working with businesses to get various transactions over the finish line. Because of that experience I went to law school and pursued opportunities in corporate law after graduation.

What advice do you have for other young lawyers? Try to gain exposure to all parts of each matter you work on. For example, if you work in corporate and mergers and acquisitions, ask to see all parts of the transaction, not just the schedules/data room, or if you work in litigation, try to gain exposure to how the lead attorneys handle and manage cases and clients. I found a huge benefit to just “being in the room” and understanding how the entire process works. Second, and tied to the first point, is to try to find someone at your job who can mentor you and push you to get that exposure. I’ve been fortunate to work with attorneys at various stages of my career who invested their own time (bringing me in on calls/pitches/negotiations) in my success.

What’s the hot topic in your practice area? Finding creative solutions in M&A transactions and commercial agreements that would be less standard absent Covid, and revisiting “stock” language (force majeure/assignment etc.) in commercial contracts in light of a turbulent business landscape.

What’s your favorite legal show, movie or book? It’s hard to top “My Cousin Vinny.”



KAREN WOHLGEMUTH

Jennings, Strouss & Salmon | Associate

Age: 30

Primary practice area: Family law and domestic relations

Law school: Arizona State University

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area?

Norma C. Izzo, chair of Jennings Strouss' Family Law and Domestic Relations practice and a Certified Family Law Specialist by the State Bar of Arizona Board of Legal Specialization, inspired me to enter the family law practice area. She has a unique approach to her practice of resolving cases in a holistic manner. She is a trailblazer in the field, dynamic, creative, an excellent mentor and leader, and genuinely cares about her practice and how to best serve her clients. I feel incredibly lucky to be working alongside her.

What advice do you have for other young lawyers? Be brave. It is easy when you are starting to practice to hide in the shadows and not rise to the occasion because you feel like you don't know what you are doing or that you are not a "real" lawyer. But you did make it – you are a lawyer. Be brave in taking the hard cases, the oral argument, the lead with client communication, and it will pay dividends.

What's the hot topic in your practice area? The impact of the pandemic on the valuation of businesses owned by the marital community. The pandemic has taken a toll on businesses and nobody can predict how long it will last, so do you value the business based on pre-Covid data, recent Covid data only, or a combination? Couples who own businesses together that are in the process of dissolving their marriage are learning firsthand how helpful it is to have a family law attorney and business valuation expert to walk them through the best approach.



GRACE REBLING

Osborn Maledon | Partner

Age: 35

Primary practice area: Government and regulatory law

Law school: University of Arizona

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? So many people have influenced my career over the years. My parents certainly inspired me to enter the legal profession. They are both lawyers. Professors at the University of Arizona introduced me to the many different areas of law, including administrative and regulatory law. And my colleagues at Osborn Maledon shaped my legal practice into one involving regulatory and compliance advising as well as general litigation.

What advice do you have for other young lawyers? If buying a home, pick one with a home office that allows you to work from home (even with kids in the next room!)

What's the hot topic in your practice area? A hot topic across practice areas is Covid-19. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected almost every industry, including the legal profession. We are adapting to remote work, virtual depositions and remote court proceedings. At the same time, we are working tirelessly to assist our clients through the myriad of hurdles posed by the pandemic.

What's your biggest accomplishment so far? I take a lot of pride in every case and matter that I have worked on over the years.

What are your career goals? Or what is on your career bucket list? I hope to continue working on matters that have a local impact and improve our community.

What's your favorite legal show, movie or book? "On the Basis of Sex"



OSCAR LOPEZ

Osborn Maledon | Associate

Age: 30

Primary practice area: Corporate law and securities

Law school: George Washington University

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? I have aspired to be a lawyer ever since the second grade. I have been fortunate to have some very powerful and influential women in my life. My main driving force has always been my mother who encouraged me to try my best at everything I do. She fought tooth and nail to give me the opportunities I now have in life despite not having those same opportunities herself. Also my high school science teacher, Ms. Rendon-Coke. After high school, I went straight into the workforce. Ms. Rendon-Coke came into my job and was forthcoming with the fact that she was disheartened that I gave up on my dream so quickly. That reminder of my passion is what I needed. I took the LSAT a few months later. She passed away before she could see me achieve my dream, but I will always thank her for the impact she had on my life.

What advice do you have for other young lawyers? Find opportunities where you can excel and help change the landscape of law. The legal profession can be overwhelming and sometimes you feel that you are swimming in the ocean with no life jacket. Build your own boat and carve a path that fits your drive.

What's your biggest accomplishment so far? Being a first-generation high school graduate from a small city in Arizona, I have always rooted for the underdog. I advocated on behalf of a wrongfully incarcerated client who served over 20 years in prison. With the help of a colleague and the George Washington University Legal Clinic, we were successful in securing his release.



SAMANTHA WINTER MCALPIN

Gust Rosenfeld | Partner

Age: 34

Primary practice area: Family estates and trusts

Law school: University of Notre Dame

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? I find deep meaning in my practice as an estate planner and probate litigator because my clients trust me to help them and their families prepare for and then navigate the legal consequences of death. It's an honor to be included in these critical decisions, and I try never to take it for granted.

What advice do you have for other young lawyers? It's important to focus on doing good, not just on doing well.

What's the hot topic in your practice area? Some of my most interesting cases have been litigating exploitation claims involving vulnerable adults. The details of these cases are often very upsetting, but I appreciate the opportunity to help right a wrong done to people who did not have the opportunity or resources to protect themselves.

What's your biggest accomplishment so far? I'm lucky to be at the beginning of a fulfilling legal career, filled with clients and colleagues who challenge me to learn and grow. My biggest accomplishment so far was being honored as the 2019 Children's Project Pro Bono Attorney of the Year by the Florence Immigrant Rights & Refugee Project. My pro bono work with FIRR reminds me that everyone, regardless of age, wealth, or citizenship, deserves competent legal representation.

What are your career goals? Or what is on your career bucket list? I was very honored to be elected to partnership at Gust Rosenfeld in 2020. I aspire to use this responsibility to continue serving my clients and my community.

What's your favorite legal show, movie or book? "Just Mercy" by Bryan Stevenson

RAISING THE BAR



ANDREW YOCOPIS

Greenberg Traurig | Associate

Age: 33

Primary practice area: Real estate law

Law school: University of California, Berkeley

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession? I did not know any lawyers or have anyone in my family who worked in the legal profession when I was growing up. To me, a lawyer was someone that wore a suit and argued in front of a judge about mundane issues. It was not until I became an adult and started working for JP Morgan Chase that I finally learned that there are lawyers who never go to court and are solely focused on advising businesses and completing transactions. That realization spurred me to apply to law school and convert my business and finance experience into a legal career that focuses on advising clients on complex real estate and financial transactions.

What's the hot topic in your practice area? Like many industries, commercial real estate has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and there are open questions about how certain sectors of our industry will continue to adjust to the challenges. On the legal side, we have spent the last several months advising clients on best practice during this challenging time or planning for potential distressed asset transactions.

What's your biggest accomplishment so far? I am most proud of my work as a member of the board of directors of Free Arts for Abused Children of Arizona. In the last few years, the nonprofit has served over 6,000 children a year through various programs.

What's your favorite legal show, movie or book? "Better Call Saul" is one of my favorite dramatic depictions of the legal field.



BYRON SARHANGIAN

Snell & Wilmer | Partner

Age: 35

Primary practice area: Real estate law

Law school: Vanderbilt University

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? My dad was a strong encouragement to enter both the legal and real estate profession. He was a real estate developer in California and Arizona. My dad's passion for real estate rubbed off on me and at a young age I knew I wanted to be involved in real estate. As a high school student, I had the opportunity to work on construction job sites and developed an appreciation that people in the community would live and work in the structures that we were building. The opportunity to work on transactions that change the face of our city and provide people with places of shelter is one that gives me great satisfaction.

What advice do you have for other young lawyers? Work to learn as much as possible each day. Ask lots of questions. As a young person, you can make up what you lack in competency with enthusiasm. Show up every day with a positive attitude and desire to learn.

What's the hot topic in your practice area? Recently, Opportunity Zones have been a very hot topic. Last year we did over 70 Opportunity Zone transactions for our real estate and business clients. Clients have been taking advantage of this incentive as it's proven to be a great opportunity to invest in real estate while receiving both a tax deferral and tax forgiveness.

What's your biggest accomplishment so far? Last year, I had the opportunity to serve as lead counsel for five transactions that were each over one million square feet of newly developed industrial space. Helping existing companies expand and new companies move to Arizona brings a lot of enjoyment to my work.



ERICA ERMAN

Dickinson Wright | Associate

Age: 29

Primary practice area: Health care law

Law school: University of Arizona

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? My dad, who is also a health care attorney, inspired and continues to inspire me to practice law. My sisters and I grew up listening to stories about his cases, and his enthusiasm for what he does was infectious. As children, we played a fun debate game around the dinner table where I would have to argue why my little sister should have a later bedtime than me (and other viewpoints I naturally would not have agreed with), and she would have to argue the opposite. We'd even get thirty seconds for rebuttal at the end. Unbeknownst to me then, it was great practice for how to bolster my arguments, and how to identify, address, and minimize the strong points of the other side's case.

What advice do you have for other young lawyers? Build your habits now. It is so much easier to maintain a good work-life balance if you start doing so at the beginning of your career. Ask clarifying questions — of colleagues and clients — and whenever possible, turn your assignments in early.

What's the hot topic in your practice area? Successful lawsuits giving teeth to the Federal Parity Act, which essentially mandates that plans containing behavioral health benefits must offer them on par with medical/surgical benefits, have been on the rise.

What's your favorite legal show, movie or book? One of my favorite legal movies is "Denial," which is based on the true story of my undergraduate professor, Deborah Lipstadt, successfully battling a Holocaust denier in a UK libel court case.



RACHEL NICHOLAS

Lewis Roca Rothgerber Christie | Associate

Age: 32

Primary practice area: Intellectual property

Law school: Arizona State University

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? When I was a summer associate at Lewis Roca, I was fortunate enough to get an intellectual property project and worked closely with Emily Bayton, Jennifer Van Kirk and Flavia Campbell, who were all partners in the Phoenix IP Group. At that time, the IP Group at Lewis Roca was majority women. I was so inspired to see a traditionally male-dominated practice area thriving with women attorneys at the helm.

What advice do you have for other young lawyers? Don't go it alone. Particularly nowadays, where so many of us are working from home, the collaboration that helps make a legal career so enjoyable is harder to come by. Finding ways to connect with your colleagues is so important. Your mental health and your work product will be better if you find your 'work people' and rely on them for feedback and connection regularly.

What's the hot topic in your practice area? Social media and influencers, which have both really changed the way even big companies market their brands. The influencer space has catapulted the idea that a person can be a brand, and protecting your persona, name, and personal brand on social media brings with its unique challenges and opportunities.

What's your biggest accomplishment so far? My family. I love the work I get to do, but I think my greatest accomplishment is raising my two young boys with my best friend.

What's your favorite legal show, movie or book? "The West Wing." I've consumed a lot of "Law & Order," and I've read most of John Grisham's work.



NICK BAUMAN
Lewis Roca Rothgerber Christie | Associate

Age: 34
Primary practice area: Litigation
Law school: University of Arizona

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? After I finished college, I worked as a legal assistant for a solo practitioner named Sid. Sid was a great mentor. He included me in developing strategy for his cases, taught me how to interview witnesses (and allowed me to interview many witnesses), and taught me about his practice areas. I was hired as a legal assistant, but the experience was a lot like being a student. I loved it and decided to become a lawyer.

What advice do you have for other young lawyers? Surround yourself with people who care about your development. I am fortunate to be able to work with so many talented lawyers who give me opportunities to shine and who go out of their way to mentor me. It can be difficult to get feedback, so finding good mentors is important.

What's the hot topic in your practice area? Fraudulent transfer claims, which basically are an attempt by a bankruptcy trustee or creditor to avoid a transfer of money or property by a debtor. These types of claims have become much more common recently as insolvency has become more prevalent. I represent financial institutions, judgment creditors, and judgment debtors, and fraudulent transfer claims have been a large part of my practice. I anticipate that fraudulent transfer lawsuits will continue to trend upward.

What's your favorite legal show, movie or book? It's not exactly a legal show, but "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia" has a character, Charlie Kelly, who has no legal training but aspires to be a lawyer with an expertise in bird law. He often encounters "real" lawyers in the show, and his interactions with them are hilarious.



BENJAMIN NIELSEN
Quarles & Brady | Partner

Age: 34
Primary practice area: Commercial litigation
Law school: University of Arizona

Who inspired you to enter the legal profession or your practice area? My 7th grade English teacher, Ms. Glenn. She had us participate in a mock trial and chose me to play the defense attorney. I remember staying up all night preparing my opening and closing arguments, trying to justify why my client should be acquitted. I had so much fun with the process - in large part because of Ms. Glenn's unwavering enthusiasm - that I knew I wanted to be in real courtrooms one day.

What advice do you have for other young lawyers? Don't be afraid to learn and expand into different areas of the law. Expertise in niche areas will come with time, but the early days are good for seeing what's out there. Also, find and engage in pro bono cases with regularity. It has always amazed me how relatively minimal effort from a lawyer can make a truly monumental difference in the life of a person in need.

What's the hot topic in your practice area? One of my areas of practice is higher education law, including in issues dealing with Title IX. Unsurprisingly, guidance as to Title IX's enforcement changes between presidential administrations. It changed in significant ways between Presidents Obama and Trump, and I expect it will change again under President Biden. Getting up to speed quickly with the new administration's guidance will be important for everyone.

What's your favorite legal show, movie or book? "To Kill a Mockingbird" was my first love in terms of books involving lawyers and legal proceedings. Atticus Finch was incredible. More recently, I've enjoyed reading about the legal careers of various American presidents, including my personal hero, Abraham Lincoln.



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Ian Nesteruk, JD '13, *Dickinson Wright PLLC*

Rachel Nicholas, JD '14, *Lewis Roca Rothgerber Christie LLP*

Melissa Soliz, JD '11, *Coppersmith Brokelman PLC*

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