

Kirkland Partner's \$11M Salary = Big Win for Women

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By Chrysta Castañeda of The Castañeda Firm

(June 4) – *The New York Times* broke the news recently that a woman commercial litigator had achieved a stratospheric salary guarantee with one of the largest law firms in the world. By moving from Cravath, Swaine & Moore to Kirkland & Ellis, Sandra Goldstein has reportedly secured an \$11 million annual salary guaranteed for five years.

Wow!

Not only is it remarkable for any litigator to sign for NFL-like cash, it is doubly notable because women lawyers are still underpaid compared to their male peers.

What can we learn from this notable achievement – as women lawyers or as those positioned to hire or promote them?

Celebrate her.

First and foremost, we should celebrate Ms. Goldstein. Not only has she scored a huge salary coup in a firm whose partners are notoriously white and male, she has stepped up and owned her success in a huge, public way.

Moreover, her news will move compensation expectations for women at all levels. It's far past time for transparency when it comes to compensating women lawyers.

Learn from her.

Ms. Goldstein appears to be a master at marketing. While she works in a high-dollar segment of litigation where companies are playing for billions, she is a classic big firm litigator in claiming her notable achievements.

Her firm bio reports that she has scored over 30 pretrial wins. She does not claim to be the most highly skilled or persuasive jury trial lawyer – though such experience in this age of vanishing jury trials is hard to come by. Many of us litigators have been raised to believe that only first chair jury trial experience matters, but this belief is apparently quite wrong.

Ms. Goldstein's professional profile is an exquisitely written example of spotlighting what she and many do best: Out-prepare the opposition and win early in the process.

Recognize her sacrifices.

Women are so hard on ourselves and other women. At no point in our careers do we escape our inner voice comparing our career choices and successes with others'. I am willing to bet that Ms. Goldstein makes more than you – she certainly out-earns me! And perhaps you (and I) are a bit jealous.



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But remind yourself of this: You cannot walk any other woman's path. To earn partnership at Cravath, she had to sacrifice mightily. She made that choice, and we each made ours. Let's all stop judging each other's ambitions and markers of success and just start celebrating our own successes as well as those who make it to the top.

If you are in a position to hire or promote a woman lawyer, do it.

Please pay attention to what is possible, as this historic achievement demonstrates. Please reset your expectations about what women lawyers can achieve and what they should be paid. Please stop asking yourself a question that you would not ask in hiring male lawyers: "But is she as good as a man?"

Please look for every opportunity to hire a woman for the best and hardest and most high-

paying legal matters you can. Please immediately discard those diversity plans that place women in low-paid representations just to boost corporate scorecards.

Please do not rest until you find a woman who meets your need for legal representation; and if you still cannot find her, find a way to nurture a woman's professional development until she can.

Finally, for those of you who are in a position to set compensation for women lawyers: You may not be able to pay an \$11 million annual guarantee, but you might be able to pay 11 women \$1 million a year.

Call the reporters when you do.

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