

2019 Women in Professional Services



Nicole Forchelli
Tax Certiorari Partner
Forchelli Deegan Terrana LLP



Jessica Leis
Land Use & Zoning Attorney
Forchelli Deegan Terrana LLP



Lindsay Mesh Lotito
Banking Attorney
Forchelli Deegan Terrana LLP



Gabriella Botticelli
Tax Certiorari Attorney
Forchelli Deegan Terrana LLP

What is your favorite motivational quote?

"Things work out best for those who make the best of how things work out." ~ John Wooden

This advice is applicable not only to my practice as an attorney, but also to life in general. It is so important to understand that a case doesn't always follow a linear path—how one adapts to unforeseen issues is a key driver of outcomes. The best attorneys I know are flexible and able to adjust effectively when confronted with the unexpected, and are not afraid to be creative in their approach.

How do you hold your own in a negotiation?

It is important to stand your ground and be assertive without being nasty. Once things get personal, it is much harder to achieve a positive result.

What recent project or transaction are you most proud of?

Settling three cases for a Fortune 500 client with an extremely difficult adversary. I was concerned that pursuing the cases may be incredibly challenging. After two years of intense litigation and negotiations, we saved the client hundreds of thousands in tax dollars, at no out-of-pocket cost to the client. They were very happy.

What is the best advice you have received, and who was it from?

My Dad told me not to take anything personally. I'm still working on that one.

Nicole Forchelli is a partner and concentrates her practice in tax certiorari and municipal law. Currently, her tax certiorari practice includes representing a national Fortune 500 company, and other large-scale commercial clients.

Prior to joining the firm, Forchelli was a trial attorney in the Brooklyn District Attorney's office. As a prosecutor Forchelli managed a caseload of over fifty felony cases at a time, successfully indicted over one hundred cases in the grand jury, negotiated hundreds of successful plea bargains, did extensive preparation of police and civilian witnesses for hearings and trials, and conducted and secured convictions in a number of trials. Forchelli was consistently recognized by her superiors for her exceptional performance and received a discretionary bonus only awarded to the top performers at the office, several years in a row.

Before the District Attorney's office Forchelli served as a clerk in the Supreme Court of the State of New York, Appellate Division, Second Department, where she researched many matters before the court, and edited judicial opinions.

What is your favorite motivational quote?

"I've never made a mistake. I've only learned from experience." ~ Thomas Edison

What is the best advice you have received, and who was it from?

Comically, some of the best advice, or food for thought, came from a Pantene commercial that came out a few years ago about women saying "sorry" in situations where there was no reason to apologize. It struck a nerve in me, and in most of my young professional female friends. Since then, I have made a conscious effort to speak with a purpose and cut the unnecessary apologies.

What was one of your biggest accomplishments in the last 12 months?

Having come from a litigation background, presenting a case to a judge or panel was nothing new; however, the Land Use & Zoning practice area was new to me. Over the past year, I am fortunate that I have had the opportunity to present, and secure approvals on, dozens of commercial and residential applications before various municipal boards. Given that Nassau County alone has over 60 different jurisdictions, there are several opportunities to step out of my comfort zone. I am proud of my accomplishments thus far, and look forward to continued professional growth.

Jessica Leis is an associate with the firm's land use and zoning practice group. She appears regularly before various municipal boards for public hearings on both residential and commercial applications and is skilled in the application process pertaining to variances, conditional/special use permits and subdivisions. She also appears in Nassau and Suffolk County District Courts on behalf of individuals and entities charged with code violations. Additionally, she drafts petitions and memoranda of law for Article 78 proceedings to appeal the municipal boards' determinations.

Prior to joining the firm, Leis was an assistant county attorney in the Tort Division of the Suffolk County Attorney's Office where she defended the County on all State Court claims. She was also previously a staff attorney for the Legal Aid Society of Suffolk County where she represented indigent clients at all stages of the criminal proceedings. During law school, she was the notes and comments editor of the Hofstra Journal of International Business and Law.

What is your favorite motivational quote?

"You can do anything, but not everything." ~ Anonymous

This is important to remember on busy days and as a female. When professional and personal responsibilities become overwhelming, I stop, take a few deep breaths and prioritize. Once I am focused, I am reminded that I am not "Super Woman." I am confident in my organizational and time management skills. As long as I tackle the project that is most important first, I know the rest will follow.

How do you hold your own in a negotiation?

I try to think of negotiations more as conversations requiring compromise. My personal "tactic" is to listen to the other side first. I find people tend to be more agreeable once they have said their piece; then they are willing to work towards a solution.

What recent project or transaction are you most proud of?

Together with Jame Ricca, Esq., co-chair of the firm's Banking & Finance practice group, we closed a complicated mortgage transaction for an institutional lender broken into two loans for seven entities and five properties located in New York and Florida. The complex nature of the mortgage tax ramifications made it challenging to structure the loan in a way that was best for the borrower(s), but provided the bank with adequate security for their loan. There was a deadline to funding; when these deals closed and funded, I was proud of what we accomplished.

Lindsay Mesh Lotito is an associate, concentrating her practice in the areas of real estate finance, banking, foreclosures, and creditors rights. Mesh Lotito primarily counsels institutional and private lenders on commercial mortgage loan transactions and represents lenders, mortgage loan servicers, and homeowners associations in the various aspects of foreclosure and collection law.

While earning her degree, Mesh Lotito worked as a law clerk with the firm, where she gained a wide range of experience in transactional and litigation matters by working with the firm's various departments.

Mesh Lotito is a graduate of Hofstra University School of Law where she was recognized for her pro bono volunteer work, receiving the Bronze Level Public Service Award. While in law school, Mesh Lotito was the managing editor of staff of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel (ACTEC) Law Journal and an intercollegiate competitor for the Dispute Resolution Society.

Mesh Lotito has been published in Suffolk Lawyer and New York Real Estate Journal. In recognition of her accomplishments, she was named a "40 under 40" Rising Stars of Queens by Queens Courier in 2017 and a "30 Under 30" by the LIBN.

What is your favorite motivational quote?

"Whether you think you can, or you think you can't—you're right." ~ Henry Ford

How do you hold your own in a negotiation?

My goal in every negotiation is to be the most prepared person in the room. I find that the best way to reach a durable agreement is to have all of the information; which includes not only your position, but your opponent's as well. Asking questions during the negotiation has been a great tool for me. Inquiring about the other person's position allows you to learn more about not only what the person wants, but why they want it. Learning about the motivations driving a person's position can often open the door for creative collaboration and compromise.

What is the best advice you have received, and who was it from?

When I choose to follow it, the best advice I have received is to not sweat the small stuff. As an attorney, it is easy to let yourself get anxious and stressed about every little detail of a case, even things that are out of your control. But as J.K. Rowling wrote, "If you worry, you suffer twice." Thankfully, I have many people in my life that remind me to take a breath, and that it is possible to prepare for the worst without letting the fear of the worst consume you.

Gabriella Botticelli is an associate at Forchelli Deegan Terrana LLP. She concentrates her practice in the specialty area of property tax refund and reduction, commonly known as tax certiorari. She has experience with properties throughout New York State, specifically the Suffolk, Nassau, and Westchester counties.

Her co-authored article, "Real Estate Tax Exemptions for Solar Energy Systems," was published in the New York Real Estate Journal. During 2017, Botticelli was a law clerk at the firm, where she gained exposure to transactional and litigation matters by working with various departments. Prior to her time at the firm, she held the following positions: Policy intern at the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault; volunteer of the court, Family Court Self-Help Center; intern to the honorable Craig Iscoe, Superior Court of the District of Columbia; and intern to the honorable Hector LaSalle, Supreme Court of the State of New York, Appellate Division.

During law school, Botticelli was a member of the Family Justice Litigation Clinic where she provided pro bono representation to indigent clients. She was responsible for every aspect of litigation, including client intake, drafting and filing of pleadings and motions, engaging in settlement negotiations with opposing parties, and court appearances on a range of legal issues.