

Rising Star: Bracewell's Jeris Diana Brunette

By **Emilie Ruscoe**

Law360 (June 8, 2021, 3:03 PM EDT) -- Jeris Diana Brunette of Bracewell LLP has served as lead counsel to Credit Agricole in connection with billions of dollars in complex financing it provided for energy industry giant McDermott International Inc. over the past few years. She's also a leader in Bracewell's New York office, where she mentors and trains early-career finance attorneys and runs the firm's quarterly sustainability bulletin. These accomplishments and others have earned her a spot among the top banking attorneys under age 40 honored as Law360 Rising Stars.

HER BIGGEST MATTER:


Brunette has been financing transactions for McDermott International since 2009, which recently included a series of funding that saw the company into, through and out of its recent bankruptcy and financing that supported McDermott's merger with Chicago Bridge & Iron Company.

"Just striking a commercial deal was a challenge — not just because our first lien debt holder group was, and is, made up of so many different constituencies, but also because the deal that we struck ultimately required a lot of innovation and implementing some unprecedented mechanics and concepts," Brunette said.

On top of that, the deal involved guarantors and collateral scattered all across the world, which she said "required a sort of Herculean cross-border effort to coordinate with local counsel all over the world to create a collateral package that, of course, had to conform to that very complicated commercial deal."

HER MOST INTERESTING RECENT MATTER:

Bracewell, an energy-focused law firm, has "a front-row seat to the energy transition," Brunette said. "We're seeing all kinds of innovation and energy right now — the energy transition has really




Jeris Diana Brunette
Bracewell

Age: 37
 Home base: New York
 Position: Partner in Bracewell's finance practice
 Law school: NYU School of Law
 First job after law school: Associate at Bracewell

taken off. You know it's not the same old deals getting done, and you're seeing a lot of innovation and a lot of innovative projects actually getting off the ground these days."

One of the most interesting energy transactions that Brunette has worked on this year included representing the underwriter in a so-called green bond offering to finance the construction of a research and development project concerning renewable natural gas.

That project is in northwest Iowa, and it's going to generate renewable natural gas by capturing it from dairy cow manure.

"Pretty innovative, something I haven't seen before!" she said.

HER PROUDEST MOMENT:

Brunette said it's been "a privilege, and exciting, to see the leaders of our Bracewell team's cross-border effort on McDermott immediately turn around and redeploy their strategies and knowledge on another" matter, representing Wells Fargo on a cross-border collateral package for an exit credit facility for Diamond Offshore Drilling.

"They've built this machine, and it operates on a completely other level. And on top of that, they just do it with this passion, even joy," she said.

WHAT MOTIVATES HER:

Brunette, a self-described nerd, said that "the more challenging the work is, the more invigorated I am."

"I love puzzles, I love unanswerable questions, I am insatiably curious — so I would have to say that the parts of my work that require problem-solving and innovation are definitely the most interesting parts of my day job, and that's really what keeps me motivated and energized," she said.

WHY SHE'S A BANKING ATTORNEY:

When she was thinking about her career as a law student, Brunette said that she always knew she wanted to be at a firm for "the long-term."

"My valuation of law firms really always centered on whether I could see myself at that firm in the long run. That's how I ended up at Bracewell, and Bracewell in New York is really quite a small office: There were just four summer associates joining as first-years the year that I was a first-year. ... Two of us were in finance or banking, and two of us were in corporate."

Since then, she added, "I've really just never looked back, and I've never even had a fleeting thought that maybe there's another practice that I'd be better suited for — I just happen to love what I do."

HOW SHE THINKS THE LEGAL INDUSTRY WILL CHANGE IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS:

Brunette expects that "the industry as a whole is really going to see a rapid uptake in women in leadership positions at the top, so to speak, as my generation, and those following me, start to move into those types of roles."

"My generation started our careers at a time when diversity in the industry was really becoming a serious conversation," she said. "And I've personally observed those conversations as having improved in the years since I started having them as a more junior attorney."

She noted that the industry is "becoming more welcoming of diverse perspectives — and I use the term diverse to mean ... not just women, but many diverse populations — instead of silencing them. I really think that it's creating some momentum, and we're going to see big changes in the makeup of law firm leadership because of it."

— *As told to Emilie Ruscoe*

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2021 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,400 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2021, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.

All Content © 2003-2021, Portfolio Media, Inc.