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Whether managing a law office or a household, Manning has the winning traits

Incorruptible integrity.
Relentlessly positive.
Profound sense of right and wrong. Genuine.
Super-thoughtful.

This is how Amy B. Manning is described by her colleagues, friends and family.

She is the Chicago office managing partner at McGuireWoods LLP, a 1,000-lawyer firm with 20 offices around the world. Manning also serves on the firm's executive committee and board of partners. She specializes in criminal and civil antitrust law and commercial litigation.

Manning has a packed schedule: three kids, busy law practice and management duties, serving as the chair of the American Bar Association Antitrust Section Civil Practice and Procedure Committee and serving on the American Diabetes Association Community Leadership Board.

Even with all of that, Jane DiRenzo Pigott, a managing director of R3 Group LLC, said Manning is always generous, especially with her time — whether it is a big international client with a middle-of-the-night problem or a law student seeking career advice.

Born and raised in Des Moines, Iowa, Manning learned early on that hard work and a positive attitude are the keys to success.

Her father taught her to always keep an open mind, to be positive and to try to take every opportunity that comes her way.

"I remember rolling my eyes because my dad was relentlessly positive, and now, I see my kids doing it to me and describing me the same way," she said.

Another skill that her parents insisted that she master was learning how to sell. She was told that if you know how to sell, you always will have a job.

So, in high school and college, Manning sold clothes at a women's clothing store.

Education was also emphasized in the Manning's household.

Manning's father had a master's

MAKING IT

Jessica A. O'Brien

Jessica A. O'Brien is a Cook County Circuit Court judge in the 1st Municipal District. She will be sworn in as president of the Women's Bar Association of Illinois on June 4.

degree, and her mother had a bachelor's degree.

Her father ran the marketing department at a local college, wrote a textbook, started a consulting business and invested in real estate. As a child, Manning joined her sister in cleaning up the homes that her parents purchased to turn into rental properties.

Manning's mother stayed home to raise her two girls until Amy was in sixth grade. Her mother owned and operated her own interior design studio with her own staff. Amy describes her mother as an extremely kind and generous woman.

"That is the one thing that my mom insists on — to always be kind and generous to everyone," she said.

After graduating from University of Chicago Law School, Manning joined Ross & Hardies.

She picked the firm because of its progressive partnership composition. The firm had two women on its executive committee and was one of the first firms to have a part-time partner. Both of these aspects were uncommon in other large law firms at that time.

One of her first assignments was to be the firm's court-call attorney, appearing for status hearings and routine motions.

"I went to court as much as I could. I believed that in order for me to get to the next level, I needed to develop instincts and to be comfortable with the (courthouse)," she said. "In court, you learn by



Amy B. Manning

being there. I introduced myself to all the litigation partners in the firm and told them that I was willing to go to court for them anytime. I took every opportunity that came my way."

As she developed, she also took initiative.

"You have to ask for feedback and then be open to criticism without getting defensive," Manning says.

When considering an associate or a partner for her firm, Manning looks for attorneys who take ownership, care deeply, are excellent team players and treat their clients' issues as their own.

Ross & Hardies merged with McGuireWoods in 2003 when Manning was a partner at Ross & Hardies. In 2005, McGuireWoods promoted her to equity partnership.

When she was promoted, Manning was at a monthlong arbi-

tration in New York with her newborn daughter and her parents while her husband and two boys manned the fort at home in Chicago. She also was working a reduced schedule.

"If you want to work reduced hours, you still need to be accessible at all times. Law is a 24/7 service type of business where the problems are time-sensitive and important. Responsiveness is absolutely critical — to your client, to the partner, to your colleague. Even if you are working reduced billable hours, you still should consider yourself a full-time lawyer," she said.

Being a woman never held her back at her firm.

"My law firm has been wonderful to me at every stage. It is one of the reasons I have been there for 23 years. I was especially blessed to have a very progressive mentor, Dick Rappaport, who allowed me to work from home when I needed to do so. This was 15 years ago when no one had ever even heard of the term 'flexitime.' I am extremely grateful to him," she said.

As the mother of three, Manning has had to constantly balance the demands of her career and the demands of family. At one particularly challenging moment, when her children were all under 7, Manning came across an essay her older son had written at school. The topic was, "If you were going to pick a leader of Elmhurst, what kind of person would you pick?"

Manning's son wrote, "If I were going to pick a leader of Elmhurst, I would pick my mom because she is nice, responsible, trustworthy and fair."

After reading this essay, Manning realized that her efforts were having a positive impact on her children. That essay has since been framed and placed next to Manning's computer at work.

"When I read what Christopher wrote, I thought, 'What a pure vision of leadership.' I have to live up to those words every single day."