

## Rainmaker Q&A: BuckleySandler's Matthew Previn

*Law360, New York (November 29, 2016, 3:38 PM EST) --*

Matthew P. Previn, a partner at BuckleySandler LLP in New York, defends banks, mortgage originators and servicers, credit card issuers, and specialty finance companies in examinations, investigations, and enforcement actions initiated by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Trade Commission, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and state attorneys general and bank regulators.



Matthew P. Previn

Previn also leads the firm's consumer class action practice in New York. He has litigated class action and qui tam cases, and defended government investigations, in matters involving the False Claims Act; Financial Institutions Reform, Recovery and Enforcement Act; Fair Housing Act; Equal Credit Opportunity Act; Truth in Lending Act; Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act; Fair Credit Reporting Act; Electronic Fund Transfer Act; and unfair and deceptive trade practices statutes.

Previn advises financial institutions in mortgage repurchase demands and litigates mortgage repurchase cases. He also counsels banks and nonbank financial services companies on consumer finance regulatory and compliance matters.

### **Q: What skill was most important for you in becoming a rainmaker?**

A: Fresh out of law school, I worked to become a good lawyer by learning all the relevant legal issues that could impact a client in a case or investigation. That made me a good lawyer, but it didn't make me a "rainmaker." I later realized how critical it is to learn and understand a client's business practices and priorities. My practice is focused on the consumer financial services industry, so years ago I made a point of learning as much as I could about how the industry works, and how my clients operate within the industry.

For example, I start every morning by reviewing various alerts I've set up to track developments potentially impacting my clients — press releases, newspaper articles, earnings calls, securities filings, etc. This helps me to anticipate a client's needs and allows me to offer more nuanced, tailored advice than a lawyer who doesn't follow these developments. And, perhaps just as important, I think clients appreciate that I am invested in, and care about, the success of their business.

But I suspect none of this would matter much if I didn't really enjoy what I do. I find consumer financial services to be a tremendously rewarding practice area. It involves really interesting legal and policy issues that implicate a large percentage of the population. If I didn't love what I do, and genuinely enjoy

working with the clients I have, I doubt I'd be successful.

**Q: How do you prepare a pitch for a potential new client?**

A: It's really quite simple: I read everything I can about the client so I can understand not just the narrow issues relevant to the matter at hand, but the bigger-picture issues that may be implicated along the way. If I'm pitching to defend a client in a government investigation, I want to understand whether the client has any other investigations or litigation, or perhaps business interests, that may be impacted by the investigation. And I'll want to anticipate any concerns that the board of directors may have that could drive the strategy for handling the investigation.

I don't think you can make an effective pitch in isolation; you have to put yourself in the shoes of the potential client so that your pitch is focused on the company's specific needs. The more I know about a company, the better I can anticipate those needs and propose a strategy that works for the company.

**Q: Share an example of a time when landing a client was especially difficult, and how you handled it.**

A: I'll share a recent example that's fresh in my memory: There was a company I had worked with on class action defense matters and I wanted to introduce that client to our CFPB practice, which is one of BuckleySandler's largest practice areas. Over the course of about a year, I sent several emails to senior lawyers at the company touting our leading CFPB practice and offering to bring a team onsite to present a CLE course on hot-button CFPB issues.

The company ignored every email — not unusual when it comes to email pitches. Then one day I sent another email pitch, but this time I received an email back saying the company had just received a Civil Investigative Demand from the CFPB and asking me to pitch for the assignment, which I ultimately got. For me, the lesson was: be patient and persistent.

**Q: What should aspiring rainmakers focus on when beginning their law careers?**

A: I tell young lawyers never to underestimate the junior in-house lawyer. Those young lawyers will one day end up being senior lawyers. Invest in these relationships. Don't make the mistake of thinking an in-house lawyer is too junior for client development outreach. Stay in touch as the young lawyer advances at a company or moves elsewhere. While other lawyers are focusing their efforts on more senior company lawyers, nurture your relationships with the younger company lawyers who will one day be the decision makers at their institutions. They will remember that you paid attention to them when no one else did.

Treat everyone, lawyers and nonlawyers alike, with respect and with the knowledge that they are deserving of your attention. It's the right way to behave, and it will never hurt you.

Finally, try to find a practice area you enjoy. You can't feign interest in a client or practice, so make sure you are doing work you find rewarding. But don't be afraid of change. Until five years ago, a large majority of my practice was class action defense work for banks and nonbank financial services companies. The launch of the CFPB five years ago created an opportunity to expand my focus, and now I spend a majority of my time helping clients navigate through CFPB examinations and investigations. You can't always plan your career transitions, so be flexible and open to evolving areas of law.

**Q: What's the most challenging aspect of remaining a rainmaker?**

A: If you are busy with existing client work, it can be a challenge to keep up with client development. But of course that's the best time to engage in client development, so that you limit your down time.

Rather than thinking about the challenges associated with client development, I prefer to think about the rewards. And for me, the biggest reward is building lasting relationships that I value and that I hope the client similarly values. I have the good fortune of genuinely liking my clients. I want them to succeed, and that makes working hard all the more rewarding.

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