

Crisis management dominates in pandemic

Name: Janel Dressen

Title: Shareholder, Anthony Ostlund Baer & Louwagie

Education: B.A., political science, Southwest Minnesota State University; J.D., University of South Dakota School of Law

Janel Dressen, shareholder at Anthony Ostlund Baer & Louwagie, is doing more pandemic-related crisis management for clients than practicing in her “sweet spot” of litigating private and family-owned business breakups.

Dressen is advising clients on employment, real estate, contract, trust and estate, banking and even child support and custody matters to help them avoid disputes or resolve them before getting into litigation.

“Because of the relationship of trust and confidence I have with them, business owners who are experiencing business issues but also personal issues are reaching out asking me to help them solve those problems,” Dressen said.

While courts largely have shut down civil litigation for now, Dressen is expecting business litigation to erupt as things return to normal.

Dressen helped Anthony Ostlund obtain a \$45 million minority shareholder buyout in the Lunds supermarket case, the largest fair value buyout on record in Minnesota, according to the firm.

Q: What’s the best way to start a conversation with you?

A: Current events or pop culture. If you know me, ask me about my kids.

Q: What prompted you to study law and pursue it professionally?

A: In second grade I declared I was going to be a lawyer. I have no idea where that originated. I knew I liked to argue. I liked to compete and I had a huge thirst



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for knowledge.

Q: What books are on your bedside table or e-reader?

A: Given the pandemic, I’ve found some time to read. I love pop culture and true stories about people who have struggled and turned their struggles into success stories, so I just finished reading “Inside Out,” Demi Moore’s memoir.

Q: What is a pet peeve of yours?

A: When experienced male lawyers speak down to female lawyers by trying to justify their position based upon their many years that they’ve been practicing. People should let their experience stand for itself.

Q: What are your favorite aspects of being an attorney?

A: My first is winning; accomplishing what my client asked me to do or getting what they ultimately think is a fair resolution. Secondly, forming meaningful and trusting relationships with my clients.

Q: Least favorite?

A: I’m a problem-solver so I don’t enjoy

dealing with lawyers who refuse to compromise.

Q: What’s a favorite activity outside your job?

A: I like to watch my kids play sports. I love to engage with them by asking questions about their generation. I also like any form of exercise, walking, running, biking, hiking.

Q: If someone visits you in your hometown, what would you take them to see or do?

A: [Sleepy Eye] is a small town of about 3,300 people in southwest Minnesota. It’s funny that it’s a small town because it’s perhaps best known as the big city that the Ingalls family traveled to on “Little House on the Prairie.” I’d give someone a tour of the entire town and it wouldn’t take long.

Q: Is there an attorney or judge, past or present, whom you admire most?

A: I admire all female lawyers who are in a firm leadership position. I think the only way for female lawyers to attain equal and fair compensation and recognition and respect in the profession is for more women to be in leadership positions in law firms.

Q: What’s a misconception people have about working as an attorney?

A: That lawyers spend all of their time in court and don’t work nights and weekends. The reality is trial lawyers spend a small fraction of time in court, and my job could not be done without working nights and weekends.

Q: What is your favorite depiction of the law or the legal profession in popular culture?

A: Julia Roberts in “Erin Brockovich” and Reese Witherspoon in “Legally Blonde.” They demonstrate that people should not underestimate the intelligence or grit of women in the legal field.

—Todd Nelson