

## Female Powerbrokers Q&A: Crowell's Angela Styles

*Law360, New York (January 27, 2014, 2:24 PM ET)* -- Angela B. Styles is a partner in Crowell & Moring LLP's Washington, D.C., office, where she co-chairs the firm's government contracts group. Her practice concentrates on government contracts counseling and litigation.

Styles served in the federal government as administrator for federal procurement policy within the Office of Management and Budget at the White House, a position requiring confirmation by the United States Senate. She also served in the General Services Administration Public Buildings Service in a senior executive service position. Crowell's Angela Styles she was responsible for the development of policies and regulations governing federal procurement. She led presidential initiatives on federal contracting and associated with contractor ethics, federal indemnification, and labor management. She also served on the Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council, the Federal Acquisition Regulation Standards Board.

**Q: How did you break into what many consider a male-dominated industry?**

A: The defense industry has been a male-dominated industry. However, as evidenced by the women leaders of Lockheed Martin and Boeing, much progress has been made over the past two decades. With the help of strong women in these roles and in the general counsel offices of companies like these, women in professional services firms supporting these companies have similarly been able to “break through” many traditional barriers. With real and significant sponsorship, mentorship and support by the women and men at these companies, women lawyers, including myself, have been able to break into this traditionally male-dominated industry.

**Q: What are the challenges of being a woman at a senior level within a law firm?**

A: The most difficult challenge is being a role model for other women. Success at a law firm takes hard work and sustained commitment to clients. That level of dedication requires difficult choices everyday about priorities. I have learned over time how to make those choices — juggling a happy family and demanding career (with a lot of help from a wonderful husband). I make every choice with full knowledge of the trade-offs while making certain I am always happy with the choices I make. It is a hard thing to model for other women coming up through the ranks or to explain that there are paths to success that don't look like mine.

**Q: Describe a time you encountered sexism in your career and tell us how you handled it.**

A: At a prior firm, while I was still an associate and several months pregnant with my second child, I was

attending a political fundraiser with a senior partner. We were having a conversation with a congressman that knew me well and told me how excited he was that I was having a second child. I had not yet told the senior partner that I was pregnant (although it was fairly obvious). In front of the congressman and a number of other people, the senior partner blurted out: "WHAT! How can you be pregnant with another one!" Everyone in the room burst out in laughter. He calmed down after I explained that I would continue working and it would not affect him or the clients.

An important aspect of dealing with him, and perceived "sexism" generally, is realizing that often there is no ill intent. People grow up with different experiences and backgrounds. For this senior partner, me having a second child meant that I would be staying home, and he didn't want to lose having me on his team. In reality, it was an awkward compliment that has made for a great story for many years.

**Q: What advice would you give to an aspiring female attorney?**

A: Work hard and don't be a lawyer unless you love it. The women lawyers that are most successful in law firms and companies are those that truly enjoy the work. The reality is that success takes an extraordinary commitment to clients and the practice of law in terms of both hours and sheer personal dedication. Unfortunately, there are only so many hours in the day, which means you will always have to make trade-offs and prioritize. If you don't love what you do, those choices can make you miserable.

**Q: What advice would you give to a law firm looking to increase the number of women in its partner ranks?**

A: Law firms need to find and create different paths to success for women. We need to make the hard choices easier. A good place to start is focusing on on-ramping successful women after maternity leave or extended periods out of the workforce. Consulting firms are very good at on-ramping. Law firms need to learn to be better at it.

**Q: Outside your firm, name an attorney you admire and tell us why.**

A: My father, Lin Barbee, who passed away three years ago. He retired as a partner from Fulbright and Jaworski's Dallas office. Although he knew well that there were significant barriers to women in the legal world, he worked very hard to move them out of the way for me.

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