

Client Service

An Interview with Brad S. Karp, Chairman, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP

EDITORS' NOTE *Chairman of the firm since 2008, Brad Karp is one of the country's leading litigators and corporate advisors. Karp has successfully guided numerous Fortune 100 companies, global financial institutions and other companies and individuals through "bet the company" litigations, regulatory matters, internal investigations and corporate crises.*



Brad S. Karp

FIRM BRIEF *Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP (paulweiss.com)*

is a firm of about 1,000 lawyers with diverse backgrounds, personalities, ideas and interests who provide innovative and effective solutions to their clients' most complex legal and business challenges. The firm represents many of the world's largest and most important public and private corporations, asset managers and financial institutions, and clients in need of pro bono assistance.

What have been the keys to Paul, Weiss' consistent leadership in the industry, and how do you define the Paul, Weiss difference?

What distinguishes us is our unparalleled track record of success on behalf of our clients, which include the world's most important public and private corporations, asset managers, and financial institutions. At the root of that is our relentless focus on excellence. We never lose sight of our clients' most important business goals, and each day we strive to surpass their expectations and deliver a compelling value proposition.

We also have been strategic and thoughtful about our growth as a firm. We have invested over many years in strengthening and

supporting our five core practices – private equity, public M&A, litigation, white collar and regulatory defense, and restructuring. In these areas, we lead the market and clients require the most sophisticated counsel.

Moreover, our talent is unmatched. Year in and year out, we are focused on recruiting, training, mentoring and advancing the most talented lawyers in the business. As part of our talent strategy, we remain deeply committed to ensuring that we continue to reflect the diversity of both our clients and our longtime home of New York City.

Paul, Weiss is known for its deep client relationships. What are the keys to retaining clients and maintaining long-term client relationships?

Our success comes down to our ability to provide unparalleled client service. Our clients come to us because they know that we are "all in" on their behalf. Our aim is to build long-standing relationships of trust with them, and support them from all angles, across practices and geographies.

Another key is our wonderful talent, both homegrown and lateral. Clients know that when they retain Paul, Weiss, they will get the highest-quality, most commercial lawyers in the industry.

Finally, we are agile. We understand what is keeping our clients up at night, and we can pivot to meet their emerging needs. In 2022, for example, we launched a Civil Rights and Racial Equity Audits practice – among the first in the nation. This spring, we launched a multi-disciplinary Digital Technology practice to help clients navigate transactions involving emerging technologies like generative AI, augmented or

virtual reality applications, and cryptocurrency and blockchain, and to defend clients facing litigation or regulatory enforcement actions involving new technologies.

What do you see as the keys to effective leadership, and how do you describe your management style?

I try to lead with empathy, an underrated but essential quality of the leaders I have most admired. I've found that one can forge much stronger bonds with colleagues and clients by trying to understand where they are coming from and having compassion for their needs. Empathy is the foundation for other qualities I believe are essential to effective leadership: respect, collaboration, and good listening skills.

Also, I genuinely love what I do, and I think that shines through in both my client work and my approach to leading the firm.

Paul, Weiss has achieved strong growth and success under your leadership. Are you able to enjoy the process and take moments to reflect on what the firm has achieved?

I am immensely proud of all that we have achieved as a firm on so many different fronts. I believe we are the finest law firm in the world. We have always had wonderfully talented corporate and M&A lawyers, but in the past decade we have truly become a destination firm for the world's leading private equity firms and Fortune 100 companies for their most transformational transactions. The success of our efforts in these two areas is likely unparalleled in the industry. Just recently, for example, we welcomed Rob Kindler, a renowned M&A advisor, from Morgan Stanley as our new global chair of M&A, as well as market-leading teams led by Neel Sachdev, a top private equity advisor in London, and Eric Wedel, a top private equity finance advisor in New York and Los Angeles.

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At the same time, we have reinforced our historic reputation as a litigation powerhouse. In the years after my election as chair in 2008, we became the go-to defender of financial institutions facing an avalanche of litigation and regulatory investigations arising from the global financial crisis, forging relationships that continue today. Today, we represent many Fortune 100 companies, including many of the world’s largest tech companies, in their most impactful, highest-stakes litigation and regulatory enforcement defense matters. We have a deep litigation bench in New York; Washington, DC; Wilmington, Delaware; and the Bay Area. In the past year, we were fortunate to bring over John Carlin, a cybersecurity expert and former Acting Deputy U.S. Attorney General; Katherine Forrest, an antitrust and AI specialist and a former New York federal judge; and Scott Sher, one of the world’s most respected antitrust advisors.

And while we have long been known for the universally high quality of our restructuring team, today we are advising companies in several of the nation’s largest bankruptcies, as well as leading creditor groups or sponsors in many others.

Finally, I am deeply gratified that we continue to lead the nation on the pro bono front. Our lawyers continue to fight zealously to protect individual liberties and fundamental freedoms and to take on the most challenging and high-impact pro bono matters.

Paul, Weiss places a major emphasis on building a diverse and inclusive workforce. Will you discuss these efforts and how critical they are to the continued strength of the firm?

The diversity of our firm community has always been a strength, and today it remains one of our greatest assets. Fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce with different talents

and world views allows us to offer our clients better solutions to their business problems. Among the myriad programs and initiatives that support diversity is our recently announced partnership with Harvard Law School to create the Future Leaders in Law Program, a pre-law fellowship for promising undergraduates from first-generation and low-income backgrounds.

Our institutional commitment extends beyond our firm. In anticipation of the Supreme Court’s decision to end longstanding affirmative action programs and policies, my partners Jeh Johnson, the former Secretary of Homeland Security, and Loretta Lynch, the former U.S. Attorney General, and I were asked to lead a New York State Bar Association task force to help businesses, universities and other professional organizations identify legal avenues to sustain diversity.

Will you highlight Paul, Weiss’ commitment to pro bono work?

From establishing the racial desegregation of schools in *Brown v. Board of Education* to marriage equality in *U.S. v. Windsor* and numerous cases in between and since, we have had a hand in many of the landmark civil rights and social impact cases of the past century. Today, our efforts continue to span the core issues facing our society. Our commitment to pro bono is shared by all, from senior partners to summer associates.

Among other impactful matters, we are collaborating with New York City’s initiative to put thousands of migrants who have arrived in the city on a pathway to employment by filing asylum applications, under the guidance of our Pro Bono Special Counsel Steve Banks, formerly the commissioner of the city’s Department of Social Services and prior to that, head of New York City’s Legal Aid Society.

Following the Supreme Court’s decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*, we mobilized to coordinate a multi-firm collaboration with the New York Attorney General to ensure pro bono legal services to New York abortion providers and women traveling to the state to access abortions, among our many other efforts across the country.

We are also spearheading important lawsuits against extremist groups espousing hate and violence. In June, we won a landmark \$1 million damages verdict on behalf of Washington, DC’s historic Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church. The court held the all-male extremist group the Proud Boys liable for its role in a violent, racist attack on the church.

Finally, in collaboration with the Robin Hood Foundation and others, we are strengthening frontline, New York City-based nonprofits fighting poverty by providing the kind of legal health checkups on their governance and standard operating procedures that we provide to our paying clients.

What advice do you give to young people interested in pursuing a career in law?

Be curious and follow your passions. There are few other professions as versatile and rewarding as the law. It can take you anywhere, whether you see yourself negotiating multibillion-dollar deals, delivering oral arguments before the Supreme Court, teaching or engaging in public service. If you approach your career with curiosity and empathy, you will have the opportunity to grow and learn every day.

And always remember that, at the end of the day, lawyering is about making an impact. Lawyers are duty-bound to play a key role in safeguarding our core democratic institutions and once-indelible liberties. ●

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