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ANN SONGER



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Shook Hardy & Bacon LLP, Partner

Responsibilities: In addition to litigating, Songer is on Shook's 10-member executive committee, which oversees firm management, policy and strategy. She is vice chair of the tort litigation section, as well as co-leader of the automotive/machinery litigation group.

Best advice: When Songer joined Shook, she was just two years out of law school — a self-described introvert and a woman in a profession dominated by male extroverts. Pat McLarney, then managing partner, told her that if she didn't feel uncomfortable in what she was doing every day, she wasn't pushing herself to be the best litigator she could be.

"I took that to heart," Songer said. "I made sure I was pushing myself into places I was

maybe uncomfortable going. Certainly, the more you do it, the more comfortable you get."

However, she added, there's no substitute for thorough preparation.

Defining characteristic: Songer is a great listener, which contributes to her tremendous credibility inside and outside the firm, Shook Chair John Murphy said.

"She's one of those people who doesn't speak a lot, but when she does, people listen to her," said George Wolf, chair of Shook's general litigation and business services division, in which Songer works. "She stands out because she is so unassuming and lets her actions and her work speak for her."

Work and life: Songer, who has two children, has advocated for family-friendly

policies at Shook. During the past 10 years particularly, she said, such policies — such as 14-week parental leave for primary caregivers, phasing back to work after leave and the option of a reduction in work schedule — have become crucial to retaining talented lawyers. Managing work and life is more of a pendulum than a balance, she said.

"There were times and days when I really did need to step back, and the firm was incredibly supportive of that," Songer said. "I want to make sure I'm paying that forward."

Wolf described Songer as a role model and a champion, particularly for young associates, for succeeding at work and family.

— Suzanna Stagemeyer