

Erin Feros

How did you get started out in your career?

Well I was an early gapper after my year 12 at school I travelled overseas for 12 months and even though I had selected law as my chosen profession during that 12 months, I was doing a lot of thinking about whether that is really what I wanted to do. I came back to university, started at the University of Queensland, did an arts/law degree and decided I liked it. So I continued on with my law degree and as my arts finished I got to enjoy the law more than I had initially when I was starting to study. I did work experience at Feez Ruthning (Allens) in Brisbane, and in my day, this is the '80's, it was not necessarily an organised summer clerkship, so it took a lot of investigation to work out where I could go and get some work experience. I ended up coming here, and it was just my fate and destiny I think, because I worked for Howard Stack, one of the partners who was doing great defamation work, and worked for the television stations, so it was all very glamorous. And I thought, yes, I really do like law. I ended up being fortunate enough to get articles Feez Ruthning, and even though I thought I wanted to be a litigator and perhaps a barrister when I first started, I rang up Feez Ruthning and asked who I was going to be working for? And they said, you are going to be working in mining and resources, which freaked me out actually because I thought, oh my god, what does that mean, I have never studied it, I do not know what it is. And to this day I have stayed in that area, doing mergers and acquisitions within the resources sector. I have had a wide cross section of work, general corporate and commercial work as well, and thoroughly enjoyed it. Apart from doing a little bit of study overseas during my career I have stayed at the firm.

How do you define success and being successful?

It is an interesting concept and you know it is different for different people in different professions. But something has stuck in my mind and it is not my original thought. But some years ago the firm had some consultants who came in to talk to us about what does actually make partners successful. They had done an analysis of professional services firms around the world, and they said it is the swan theory. SWAN. And they said, you know a lot of people are Smart, they have to Work hard and they have to be Ambitious, but to be truly successful you have to satisfy the N which is nice. And I look at it now and I have taken it upon myself to find what I think nice is. I think it is being collegiate, being a team member, being respectful, easy to work with, supportive of others, giving praise to

others, injected with an element of humility. And I think at the end of the day, that is what really makes somebody successful, not just professionally but in life generally.

Did you or do you have mentors?

Not in a formal sense, but again when I started at the firm I was very fortunate I believe, in the partner who supervised me in the early days and I continued to work closely with him throughout. And it was never a formal mentoring at all, but it was more by observation. And I found just watching him work, looking at the way he handled meetings with clients, upholding always the highest level of integrity, and these characteristics I found just stuck with me. I could observe other people as well in their practices, but I found that really stood me in good stead for where I was. I remember when I became an associate back then, it was not called senior associate, and he said to me, 'always look for opportunities to impress, you will know what I mean'. And I did, I remembered those words. And then when I became a partner, I remember he said to me, 'always be one of those partners who helps others, always be helpful, you will know what I mean'. And only small comments, I have found they guided me in my career. So I do regard him as a mentor. He does not know that I think he was my mentor! But I adopted him as one without him knowing.

How do you balance work and life?

With some difficulty and I will freely admit that. I think at the end of the day though, as well as having a strong work ethic, I also have very strong family ties and values and commitments, so it naturally falls sometimes. You make a choice, you have to compartmentalise, though have flexibility within that compartmentalisation, and I can really enjoy leisure. I can enjoy doing nothing, it is great!

What has worked for you and good advice for someone coming up in their career?

I think the most important thing is, be yourself. Do not role play and adopt a persona that you think somebody thinks you should have for this role. Really be true to yourself. Be yourself. You have to have an ability to laugh at yourself too, do not take yourself too seriously. And have a great sense of humour. I could go on for some time on specifics, but they are the basic things. Most importantly be yourself.

Apart from the Law, what would your dream career be?

There are many, many different careers I often dream about when I am having a bad day at work, what would be much better than this? But I have actually thought that the skill set that I have developed while at work, and one of the characteristics I have is good organisational skills, working

on large transactions, seeing the end result, working towards it, getting all of the pieces together, that I think would set me in good stead to be a film producer or director. Because at the end of the day, as well as making a social commentary you have to see the end result of where you have got to have a vision about where you want to end up. And you put all of the pieces together to produce something and the best part about being a film producer of course is you have got always in existence the end product of your work, rather than a transaction bible or something like that. So I think that is just playing with my creative side that I like to think I have!

Who is a woman you find inspirational? Why?

It is interesting because I do not think there is any one woman in particular that I find inspirational, but I derive inspiration from I guess a synthesis of a number of the characteristics of women that I have come across, both professionally and in my work on the charity committee where we deal with a lot of highly successful people in the medical field who do research. And I think there is a commonality of the elements which there is always a touch of brilliance and benevolence, humility and humour, and they come together really well. But you also synthesise that with just women generally, you know, we are supportive of each other, we talk to each other, you look at anyone here at work in an environment, and you will always take away a great characteristic from that person that you derive strength from and inspiration. Caring for each other, nurturing and supportive, multi-tasking and getting on with it. I guess it is a combination of all those characteristics.