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Jillian Zvolensky is a senior associate in Blank Rome's Finance, Restructuring, and Bankruptcy practice group. She has significant transaction experience in acquisition and leveraged buyout financing, asset-based financing and cash flow financing along with restructurings, reorganizations and workouts. Jillian actively volunteers for Compass Philadelphia, a nonprofit organization that provides pro bono consulting services to nonprofits in the Greater Philadelphia region, and Small Things, a local organization that packs and distributes food to neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia. Jillian graduated from Boston University School of Law, during which time she served as a judicial intern for the Honorable Mary L. Cooper of the Federal District Court for the District of New Jersey and was the executive editor for professional articles for the Review of Banking & Financial Law. Jillian is the co-founder of, and serves as an alumni leader for, the Philadelphia chapter of BU Law's Young Alumni Council.

What is the best professional advice you have been given and how have you implemented it?

To be authentic and let people see who you really are. Following this simple advice has helped me build, maintain and grow valuable relationships inside and outside of Blank Rome.

There can often be societal pressure to conform to a certain image of what a successful professional is supposed to look like, but I've found it to be much more fulfilling and beneficial to my career to be myself and to share the things about my background and personality that make me unique. Being authentic has helped me gain the trust and respect of my colleagues and has led to genuine connections and invaluable mentorships. I'm also grateful to count certain of my colleagues as some of my closest friends.

This advice has also changed the way I view networking and business development. The idea of networking and business development can be daunting, especially as a young professional. I remember when I was a junior associate, even the thought of having lunch with an industry professional made me feel uncertain. I would think, "How could I possibly sustain an intelligent conversation about a practice area I had just begun?" But, after experiencing a few client meetings and industry events, I realized networking and business development were really about making friends. If I focused on getting to know who people really were and let them see who I really was, all of the awkwardness and discomfort of "networking" or "business development" fell away and created space for connections to develop naturally, the same way they did in my personal life.

How do you define a good leader?

A good leader is empathetic, sparks a desire in those around them to be great by demonstrating greatness themselves and creates an environment that fosters safety, trust and reciprocity—essentially, "if you have my back, I'll have yours". I disagree with the notion that one must be born a good leader. Rather, I think everyone is capable of becoming a good leader. We can strive to intentionally practice qualities of good leadership and build better work environments by making those qualities part of the value system that organizes our work lives.

Did you change the way you approach work while working remotely during the pandemic? Have these habits stayed with you as we emerge from the crisis?

The transition to solely working remotely was disorienting in the beginning. Like many other new remote workers during the pandemic, the lines between my work life and home life quickly became blurred. Carving out dedicated time to go to the gym during the week helped me re-establish structure. I treat going to the gym like a meeting and rarely miss a session. It's helped me stay consistent with my workout routine, which has a positive effect on my well-being. Even when work is buzzing, the hour or so break ensures my mind will be clear when I come back to my desk and I'll be ready to take a fresh look at whatever problem I'm working on. This routine has stayed with me and is a routine that I will continue going forward.