

Practical Law Journal Q&A with Ellen Conley

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Haynes Boone Partner [Ellen Conley](#), who serves on the *Thomson Reuters Practical Law Oil & Gas Advisory Board*, was featured in a Q&A with *Practical Law Journal*.

She discussed key trends shaping the energy industry, including geopolitical uncertainty, evolving financing structures and the growing role of artificial intelligence in legal practice. Conley also shared insights on her career, approach to mentoring and business development and the tools attorneys need to succeed in a rapidly changing market.

Read an excerpt below.

As a Practical Law Advisory Board member, how do you hope your professional experience will help Practical Law stay ahead of emerging legal and market developments?

I consider my perspective somewhat distinctive in that I do not primarily identify as a finance or corporate attorney, but rather as an energy attorney whose work spans a wide variety of practice areas touching oil and gas. That breadth gives me a holistic view of the industry and, importantly, allows me to identify how shifts in one area are rippling into others.

That said, I believe the real value of the advisory board lies not in any single member's experience, but in the collective insight that emerges when the full group ... comes together to compare what we are each seeing on the horizon. ...

What do you see as the biggest challenge currently facing energy sector clients?

Geopolitical uncertainty. The ripple effects of shifting trade policies, sanctions regimes, and regional instability touch virtually every aspect of oil and gas transactions, from commodity pricing and capital availability to counterparty risk and long-term investment planning. Clients are being forced to make significant capital commitments in an environment where the regulatory and geopolitical landscape can shift dramatically between signing and closing.

Are there any developments that you believe will significantly impact the oil and gas industry and legal practice?

The continued growth and maturation of asset-backed securitization (ABS) in the oil and gas space will have a significant impact. Because securitizations advance against the present value of proved developed producing reserves at significantly higher rates than traditional reserve-based lenders, buyers who finance acquisitions through ABS structures can deploy substantially more leverage per dollar of asset value. The practical result is that ABS-backed buyers are consistently outbidding competitors who rely on conventional bank financing. ...

What personal struggle or professional challenge has had the greatest impact on your career trajectory?

In 2023, I was diagnosed with appendiceal cancer. ... The time I spent working through that period confirmed something I had suspected but never been forced to articulate, namely, that I genuinely enjoy this work, and this is a career I want to build for the long term (because I am going to be here for it). That realization fundamentally shifted my perspective and focus. It gave me permission to be more intentional about the relationships I invest in, the matters I seek out, and the kind of practice I want to build. ...

In an increasingly competitive legal market, what strategies do you employ to generate business and retain talent?

I authentically invest in my relationships with people, whether they are clients, colleagues or those who eventually become friends. ... I focus on becoming a go-to resource for clients by understanding their industries deeply and anticipating issues before they arise, which leads to repeat engagements and referrals. ... I apply the same philosophy internally by mentoring junior attorneys, giving them meaningful exposure to clients and transactions, and creating an environment where people feel invested in and challenged. ...

What steps is your law firm taking to attract and retain diverse talent?

Haynes Boone is known for its collaborative culture, and that culture is itself a retention tool. People stay where they feel genuinely supported. We operate as a team, so a win for one attorney is a win for the group, which removes the zero-sum dynamic that can push attorneys out of firms where they lack established networks.

Beyond culture, the firm invests in structured mentorship, equitable access to high-profile matters and sponsorship that connects diverse attorneys to business development opportunities early in their careers. ... The result is an environment where diverse talent is not only recruited but also developed and retained. ...

Read the full article on *Practical Law Journal* [here](#).