

2024 RISING STAR

Emily Geier



Emily Geier of Kirkland & Ellis LLP has shepherded distressed companies through some of the largest and most complex restructurings in recent history, including leading the wind-downs of toy retailer Toys R Us and clothing seller Express Inc. in challenging global circumstances, earning her a spot among the bankruptcy attorneys under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

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Her biggest case:

While Geier worked on the sprawling, \$49 billion bankruptcy of Energy Future Holdings early in her career, her biggest and most complicated representation came in the Chapter 11 case of Toys R Us. The company filed for bankruptcy with \$5 billion of debt and plans to reorganize its balance sheet, but after dismal sales

during the 2017 holiday season, the company made a sharp shift to an orderly liquidation.

“It was an incredible pivot to liquidation and something that I, and I think even my partners, had not really had to grapple with very much in the past,” Geier told Law360. “Facing this unavoidable liquidation, and how we would still reach resolution and

closure for the parties despite that, was a very big challenge.”

Comparing the work on that case to a “general in wartime,” Geier said navigating through the crisis helped her grow out of her associate role and more fully embrace her status as a principal attorney with Kirkland.

Her proudest moment as an attorney:

In the case of clothing retailer Express, Geier and a team of attorneys in June helped stave off the same fate that befell Toys R Us and achieve a going-concern sale of the business for \$160 million at a time when retail operations are struggling mightily due to the follow-on effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“It was a very proud moment to save Express,” Geier said.

She also has led the lightning-fast restructurings of Full Beauty Brands and Sunguard AS Capital, which each confirmed Chapter 11 plans less than 24 hours after filing for bankruptcy.

But her string of legal victories in the Toys R Us case gave her the confidence to litigate when necessary. Sometimes appearing on a contested matter in the case every other week for months on end, Geier said she never lost on a legal issue, which paved the way for the complex settlements that allow for the

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confirmation of five separate Chapter 11 plans.

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What motivates her:

While restructuring law deals mostly with dollars and cents, Geier said it’s the people that keep her going. Working primarily as debtor counsel, she said she mostly works with clients who have never experienced a bankruptcy case before.

“Guiding the client in a way that gives them comfort and a complete understanding of the process, that motivates me to keep going,” Geier said. “I want to make sure they’re not let down.”

Her advice for young attorneys:

New attorneys working in restructuring law should reach outside their comfort zones to expand their experience as quickly as possible, and make themselves valuable members of the team.

“Work harder than anyone else. Be interested. Read everything. Really dive into the process and don’t be above any part of it,” she said. “That’s the best way to really develop quickly.”

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