

## ▶▶ DISTINGUISHED LEADERS

### CAROLINE KRAUSS, VALENTINA SHAKNES

FOUNDING PARTNERS AT KRAUSS SHAKNES  
TALLENTIRE & MESSERI

#### What are some of your proudest recent achievements?

**W**e are enormously proud of our decision to start a new venture together, one that would be our own. Having known each other for almost 20 years, we share an unwavering commitment to the highest ethical standards fostered in an environment of respect, creativity, collegiality, dedication to client service and the highest quality of legal work. We are proud of creating a highly successful new firm that will be dedicated to, and built around, these principles.

#### Name a lawyer or mentor whose leadership inspired you.

**Krauss:** My mentor was Stanford Lotwin, who started the family and matrimonial law group at Tenzer Greenblatt LLP, which became Blank Rome LLP in 2000. Stan was a gentleman who practiced ethically and respectfully, proving that a great lawyer can achieve desired results without resorting to the disrespectful behavior which has sadly become the new normal.

**Shaknes:** Twenty years ago, after graduating from college, I was hired as a paralegal at Blank Rome by Krauss, who was then a new partner. I returned to the firm as an associate after graduating from law school to practice with Krauss, now as a lawyer. I admired, and was inspired by, Krauss's highly humane approach to, and individual respect for, her subordinates and colleagues.

#### How are the business and profession of law changing, and how should lawyers adapt for the future?

The COVID-19 "shelter-at-home" era will permanently change how we practice law. Hopefully, with the introduction of court conferences electronically, the inefficiencies of in-person court appearances will be reduced, resulting in less needless expenditures of counsel fees. Working remotely has proven to be effective, reducing the "face time" requirements imposed by many law firms. This will improve morale and lawyer retention. It will



Caroline Krauss



Valentina Shaknes

also reduce the amount of real estate a law firm needs to operate, reducing costs and thereby improving profits.

#### What is the best advice for someone considering a career in law, or someone already in the profession who is seeking to make a greater impact?

**Krauss:** Be true to your values. It is oftentimes very hard not to take the path of least resistance, but it's worth it both because of how you will feel about yourself and the respect you will have earned from colleagues and clients.

**Shaknes:** Make your own path. There is no one "right" way to be a great lawyer. Practice in the way that is natural to you. For example, you do not need to be overly aggressive in every case just because others are—you may achieve better results by staying true to yourself.