

OUR PEOPLE

My White & Case story

London Partner Jill Christie talks about her career to date.



London Partner Jill Christie's journey into law started earlier than most – she knew she wanted to be a lawyer from the age of five.

Though her father's career path saw him start and run a lumber company in Portland, Oregon, he had a law degree and had a keen passion for business.

"I remember looking at his law books and being fascinated by them," Jill explains. "He also told me that the *Wall Street Journal* was the only newspaper worth reading and, while I didn't understand a lot of it at first, I became really interested in the human stories behind business news.

"I knew from an early age that I wanted to be a lawyer and to live abroad, so I identified US capital markets as a practice area (maybe THE practice area!) that would enable me to do both."

Jill started her legal career at Fried Frank in Washington, D.C. and, in 2004, moved to their office in London.

She says: "Moving to London fulfilled a career ambition, but I was still conscious that, Fried Frank was very much a US firm with a London satellite office, rather than a genuinely global firm.

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"White & Case is one of the few truly international firms where that's possible, and I was also attracted by the fact that the London office was growing at a rapid pace. and I could see myself fitting into the practice."

Jill joined the Firm in 2007 as a fourth-year associate. She says: "It was an exciting place to be. We were at the peak of the boom in leveraged finance and growing exponentially."

That would change when the bottom dropped out of the entire world economy in 2008.

Jill says: "At the time, a colleague jokingly commented that, if I wanted to start stockpiling canned food now would be the time to do it!

"Unlike most economic downturns, every transactional practice area suffered. It was a scary time, but also a good lesson in how to be resilient.

"There are similarities to the Covid-19 pandemic because you have to accept that the situation is out of your control, knuckle down and focus on the things you can influence, like building knowledge and using it as an opportunity to learn and grow."

Jill also found that a willingness to step out of her comfort zone helped and, when friend and colleague Anna-Marie Slot was asked to move to Hong Kong to build the office's leveraged finance practice, Jill accepted the chance to move.

She says: "While Hong Kong had been hit by the global recession, it didn't suffer as much as the United States or the UK, so it was the right time to go there and try something different.

"I think the Firm appreciates and encourages people who are willing to move somewhere else and our global footprint was never more valuable than in those years.

"My time in Hong Kong really benefited my career because building the practice involved getting out there, meeting people and developing relationships. That's been invaluable to me ever since."

Jill returned to London in 2010 as the high yield market began to expand again.

She says: "I had my first child, William, in 2011 and made partner in 2014, so it was a very exciting time for me personally and professionally.

"I think the Firm appreciates and encourages people who are willing to move somewhere else and our global footprint was never more valuable than in those years."

"Throughout my career at the Firm, I've had many highlights, but the biggest is simply working with people from so many different cultures and travelling.

"From someone who grew up in a very un-international city, it's incredible to be able to spend time in cities like Warsaw, Paris and Milan with my colleagues.

"My work has covered all jurisdictions and, if I was to pick out one matter, it would be when we took Polish client, Play, public in 2017.

An open book is shown from a top-down perspective, resting on a dark wooden surface. The right page features a large, bold, italicized quote in black text. The left page is mostly blank, with a small portion of the quote visible at the bottom. The book's spine is visible in the center, and the pages have a slightly aged, off-white tone. A small blue search icon and a small blue speech bubble icon are visible on the right edge of the right page.

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"That was a high-pressure deal advising the client and sponsor on their first equity listing, so it was challenging, but it was wonderful to be a part of a massively successful win for the client."

Jill became head of the London Capital Markets Group between 2017-2019, a responsibility she enjoyed.

She says: "Our former regional section head offered me the role and I took it right after I came back from maternity leave from my second child. Again, it was jumping back in at the deep end, but am proud of what I achieved, including improving staffing processes and bringing the entire capital markets team together for a number of successful retreats, which is not always easy when we have so many different sub-practices in one group."

Looking back on her career to date, Jill has this advice for people looking to reach their potential in the Firm. She says: "While any career development involves a bit of luck and timing, I don't think you get those opportunities unless you put yourself forward and have the confidence to know you can adapt and do things you've not tried before."

"You should never underestimate the power of relationships. During my years at the Firm, I've developed a large network of contacts, naturally rather than strategically. Many of my colleagues are genuine friends and that helps build relationships, as well as making work so much more enjoyable."

While the Covid 19 pandemic was a challenge, Jill believes it has also had its benefits.

She says: "A lot of the practice's work involves face-to-face contact and travel, so it was a real game changer."

"For example, where we would have flown out to Chile to sit down with the client and work on drafting business disclosure, Covid meant that was impossible."

"We had to find a new way to communicate and to do things virtually in a way that wasn't forced. But we rose to the challenge and really benefited from the Firm's investment in technology."

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"While I'm looking forward to things getting back to something like normal, I think we've also learned the benefits of efficiency and remote working, so we'll need to work out how to retain that, while rediscovering the positive aspects of work before the pandemic."

Jill became head of the London Women's Network in 2020 before taking over as Head of the Global Women's Initiative Committee in May.

She says: "Helping talented women reach their potential is something I'm passionate about. I attended an all-women's college and that gave me an appreciation of what women can achieve, so to be given the opportunity to develop the Firm's approach and support of women is a huge privilege."

"I've taken over from Carina Radford, who is a tough act to follow. A lot of good work has been done already and my focus over the next few years will be for us to best support exceptional female talent. We'll be working with the diversity committee and the other stakeholders to achieve that goal."



"As someone who is balancing raising two children with my career, I feel I've been well supported by the Firm and the culture is only improving. We're not perfect, but we're taking big strides forward."

Jill has certainly enjoyed her career at White & Case so far. She says: "I love my job and I'm a complete nerd for our product."

"I've always been really interested in high-yield bonds and the pretty wild origin story of the market in the 1980s (if anyone is looking for book recommendations, let me know—I have some great ones)."

Jill offers this advice to people on getting the most out of their time with White & Case. "I'd say, look for opportunities to stretch yourself," she says.

"It's also important to have a sense of humour and enjoy the 'small' moments at work, like a cup of coffee with a colleague. It's good to have a vision of where you want to be, but I would try not to put time limits on things. Focus on what you can control and be present in the moment."

Speaking about the Firm's 2025 Strategy, Jill believes investing in our people and trusting their instincts is the key to the Firm differentiating ourselves and providing a client experience that is set apart from our rivals.

She says: "Every day I come into the office, I think of whether my Dad's company (a small business based in Oregon) would pay for what I'm doing."

"It helps keep me grounded and super-focused on efficiency and adding value."

