SPOTLIGHT ON. . .
Boston Neutral Conna A. Weiner, Esq.

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- Lived and worked in Switzerland and has traveled extensively internationally for work and pleasure

- Was heading towards a career in modern dance before leaving New York University's School of the Arts, to attend Oberlin College, where she double majored in Government and Dance

- Doesn't mind assuming the risk of cooking things that she has never tried before for guests

Available in Boston, Washington D.C. and nationwide

Ms. Weiner began her career as a litigator at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison in New York and then spent more than 20 years in-house fielding diverse, complex issues for multinational life sciences companies in the U.S. and abroad, including as a General Counsel. More recently, Ms. Weiner has developed an active ADR practice serving as an arbitrator and mediator on a number of well-known national and international provider panels, with a complex case specialization in biotech, life sciences (pharmaceuticals, devices, diagnostics), health care and other complex commercial and business matters.

How did your previous roles in-house help prepare you for a career in ADR?

In-house counsel must be able to master many areas of law and effectively communicate practical, realistic advice that fits in with their client's business objectives. In a mediation, these skills enable me to help parties conduct a simultaneous two-track analysis: a perceptive business negotiation and an evaluation of each side's chances should they end up in arbitration or litigation. In an arbitration setting, I have a visceral understanding of the need for companies to get back to business quickly and the concerns many inside counsel (and their outside counsel litigators) have about time and efficiency.

What practice areas are you particularly interested in developing at JAMS?

I have broad experience, but special expertise in the life sciences and health care fields. I have had the opportunity to explore the full range of unique legal issues facing innovation companies, including every phase of product research, development and commercialization. I have worked for branded and generic, human and animal pharmaceutical, vaccine and device manufacturers, all while collaborating extensively with their business partners. In health care cases, I think that parties see me as a neutral who is very knowledgeable about the health care environment but does not have the so-called "baggage" of having represented directly either payors or providers when I was an advocate.

What are your most successful traits as a mediator?

In addition to having a diverse transactional and litigation background, I emphasize the flexible, customizable nature of mediation. I try to help parties view it as a process consisting of several stages: depending on the matter, it could include information gathering/preparation and discussions with the mediator; in-person sessions involving active participation by key business people and their attorneys; and work in between or after sessions to draft documents or follow up if a complete settlement is not achieved. I am persistent and patient in connection with any follow up.

What are your most successful traits as an arbitrator?

I am responsive and engaged. I actively manage the process and am not afraid to take steps that may shorten the proceedings, such as consideration and granting of dispositive motions. I read all the papers and seek to develop an understanding of the key facts and law as early as possible so that I am prepared to hone in on the important issues. I work with the parties to shape an appropriate discovery plan. I am prepared to make clear, law-based decisions regarding who should prevail. I try to make sure that the parties understand my concerns with their positions as we go along so that they can address them through arguments and evidence rather than be shocked by the final, law-based award. Ultimately, it is important to give all sides a full and fair process while ensuring that proceedings do not go on longer than they should.