

## SFNET'S 40 UNDER 40 PROFILES

### LEGAL SERVICES



■ **FRANK A. MONTES DE OCA**  
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**F**rank is an associate in the Finance & Restructuring practice group of Troutman Pepper. Frank focuses his practice on representing financial institutions, private investment funds, investors, and borrowers in a wide range of domestic and cross-border financing transactions, including investment grade and middle-market transactions. He also represents clients in workouts- and restructuring-related matters. Frank's clients span numerous industries, including private equity, energy investments, manufacturing, transportation, and lumber and pulp, among others.

Frank earned his Juris Doctor from Florida A&M University College of Law, magna cum laude, and his B.A. in business administration from the University of Central Florida. Frank currently serves as a member of the board of directors of the Orlando, Florida chapter of SFNet. Frank is based out of the Atlanta, Georgia office of Troutman Pepper, but resides in Orlando, Florida with his wife, Maria Gabriela, and his son, Frank Julian.

#### How do you define a good leader?

I think a good leader is someone who makes people uncomfortable and challenges them to see things from a different viewpoint. So many people who make it to a large law firm practice have been incredibly successful in their academic career that it feels overwhelming when they first begin to practice. A good leader knows what that discomfort is like and uses it to help others learn by nudging those they lead in the correct direction towards professional growth and development.

#### What advice do you normally give to the junior talent you mentor?

The first thing I always tell entry level associates is don't open up a credit agreement without knowing what to look for or they will immediately get a migraine. We've all been there, unfortunately. Next, I encourage them to do a little bit of everything. It's easy to see successful senior attorneys who are highly specialized, but I think early on junior attorneys should do a bit of it all. Flexibility and a wide knowledge base are really helpful to ease the sharp learning curve in our practice. It also is extremely beneficial for the associate to market their skills to the senior attorneys whose clients they service.

#### What are some negotiation tactics you've learned over the years?

The most important negotiation tactic I've learned is quite simple: the deal needs to close. Many people tend to forget that and take an adversarial stance when, in our line of work, borrowers and lenders need to co-exist and have a fruitful relationship built on trust. Lawyers can only hurt that if they try (and inevitably fail) to negotiate an extremist position. Rather, the key is to listen to your clients and what matters to them. If an informed client tells you that they can live with what you perceive as non-market and

onerous terms, then it is illogical to fall on your sword over those terms. There are certain points that are "must haves" and those are the ones that a lawyer needs to always keep in mind. But lawyers should absolutely avoid having legal (non-commercial) issues become the last set of issues holding up a deal.

#### How would you encourage young professionals to become more involved in their community or volunteer? How have these activities outside of work helped shape your professional life?

My advice is to find something that you care passionately about. I care about our immigrant communities and so I've dedicated time helping those whose shoes I once was in. The passion goes a long way because without that, you will do things half-heartedly and others will notice. We all have different causes that speak to us, so don't feel pressured to support a cause that may not pull at your heart strings solely because it is something that a colleague or client does. You should serve the community that you think would best benefit from your desire to help them and usually that is the one about which you are most passionate.

Helping immigrant communities has served me because it helps put my professional life in perspective. Every time I go to a closing dinner or other client event, I am grateful that I have these opportunities knowing how many others who look like me and share my background may never have these experiences. It makes me want to be a better lawyer and person every day and to serve my clients to the best of my abilities demonstrating the positive immigrant work ethic my parents proudly instilled in me.

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