

PROFILE

Brianne K. Kurdock Pipeline and HazMat Safety Attorney

What is the best professional advice you have ever received? Manage your own career. I received that advice before starting law school, and it still sticks with me. Figure out what you like to do and what is good for you—and recognize that what that is might change as your life changes. I've applied that advice at every step in my career; for example, I was intentional about first gaining experience through government work, then developing contacts by working for a trade association. Each of my job changes was very purposeful, to manage my own career trajectory.

What do you consider your greatest professional achievement? Building this practice. This was an incredibly unique opportunity, to build a practice from the ground up and to make it successful. My friends, Jim Curry and Keith Coyle, and I did that together, and I am very proud of where we are nine years later.

What do you most enjoy about your practice? This is probably true of most people, but I love that no day is the same. On Sunday night, I can sketch out a list of what I expect to do on Monday, and I may end up not touching any of that. I also enjoy that I get to grapple with very complicated questions. I have to dig in and learn hyper-technical subject matter, often from engineers and other folks, in order to understand and solve my clients' problems. I enjoy the challenge and reward of learning something new and solving little puzzles every single day.

What advice do you have for attorneys interested in developing a niche practice? Go after the work you want to do. You will find there are all sorts of complex questions within a practice area. Find something specific that is interesting to you, and volunteer to take on those projects. Learn the subject well, and before you know it, you will be the go-to person in that area.

What would you say to young women hesitant to enter what has historically been a male-dominated profession? This profession, and the oil and gas industry in particular, can be very male-dominated. When I started practicing 20 years ago, I was the only woman in the room—and the only person under the age of 50. That is changing, though, and I would encourage young women lawyers to be part of that change. Your advice, your opinion, and your perspective all matter. Make sure you are in that room.

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In an alternate life where you are not an attorney, what would be your profession? If I could do anything, I would learn how to train seeing eye dogs. I have adopted two labradors now that were in contention to become seeing eye dogs but were released at the puppy stage. Working with that program and adopting their released puppies, it has been fascinating to me how you can train a dog to sense changes in the sidewalk, or that a child is going to have a seizure. I tell my husband all the time that I will volunteer with them when I retire.

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