

WOMEN WORTH WATCHING

Title:	Managing Partner and Member of Policy Committee
Company:	Dechert LLP
Headquarters:	New York, New York
Business:	Law
Employees:	1,814
Education:	BA, Yale University; JD Yale Law School
First Job:	Waiting tables at a seafood restaurant
I'm Reading:	<i>Life After Life</i> by Kate Atkinson; <i>My Beloved World</i> by Justice Sonia Sotomayor
My Philosophy:	You get back from life what you put into it.



“...doing something that makes you feel good is fundamental to success.”

Laura Gonzalez Ciabarra

Dechert LLC's Managing Partner learned a lesson on 9/11 that changed her career perspective.

When interviewing attorneys who apply to Dechert, I tell them to pay careful attention to the atmosphere they feel in the office. I explain that they will spend more time at work than they will with their friends, their family, their pets, or their spouse...and that's a huge amount of your life to spend on anything that does not feel good.

I believe that doing something that makes you feel good is fundamental to success. On September 11, 2001, I was on my way to work in Manhattan. My office windows faced the World Trade Center; I had spent years looking at the river between the towers. I was 10 minutes late that day, missing the subway to my stop inside the WTC.

I watched the planes hit and the towers crumble.

I lost many things that day. I also gained something invaluable—the realization that fate had spared me that day and that I could not take my life, or my choices, for granted ever again.

So, I asked myself hard questions about what I was doing with my life, and whether it fulfilled me. And I was surprised by my answers. I loved being a lawyer—thinking hard, negotiating subtle business points, operating in a “let's make a deal” world. But I did not love working in Manhattan, away from friends, family, and open green spaces.

To honor what made me feel good, I had to change firms, and relocate and reevaluate how I defined “success.” A decade later, I split my time between New York and Connecticut (my clients do not care where I sit as long as I am available) and I manage an office full of vibrant attorneys that is a model for diversity. But most important, I feel good about coming to work every day.

On the Person Who Has Had The Most Profound Influence In My Life

I joined Dechert in 2005. Jack Gillies, the head of Dechert's real estate finance group, had been my boss at a prior firm and knew me

from early in my career. In the decade since we had worked together, I had grown from an associate to a partner, and it was critical to my success at Dechert that Jack treated me as a peer from the day I arrived—not as that junior attorney he once knew. He did. He gave me the support and credibility I needed and the chance to show who I had become. I'll always be grateful for that.

On What It Takes to Remain Competitive

Staying competitive in the business law community requires understanding what your clients do. To be an advisor and legal counselor, rather than a talented scribe, you need to know how your clients function, how they make their money, how they define success, and how financial and political events impact their business. It is something you won't learn in law school; it's learned daily in the course of your work. **PDJ**