

A WOMAN WHO STANDS OUT IN IN CRE INDUSTRY

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Amy Wells, a partner with Cox, Castle & Nicholson in Los Angeles, is a top advisor to public pension funds and sovereign wealth funds in all aspects of complex domestic and international real estate, infrastructure and private equity investments. She was recently recognized by an industry publication as a top influential woman, a representative of the firm reports.

In a release from the representative, Wells is described as having a 30-year tenure at the firm, developing and growing its representation of public pension funds and sovereign wealth funds, and in the past 12 months, championing real estate commitments valued at more than \$3.4 billion across all product types.

SoCal Real Estate spoke with Wells about her career, the challenges of being a woman in the male-dominated commercial real estate industry, and the strategies she used to overcome those challenges.



Amy Wells | Courtesy A Representative of Cox, Castle & Nicholson

***SoCal Real Estate:* At what point in your career did you feel you had “made it”?**

Wells: I don’t think there is one “eureka” moment where I felt I’d “made it.” Instead, there have been many milestones along the way that made me feel successful. As I look back now, I realize that the early milestones, such as being the lead lawyer on a deal, may not represent success to some, but it certainly made me feel that I’d “made it.” Along the way, the milestones became more substantial, as I progressed from being the lead lawyer on a single deal to the lead lawyer on multi-state, multi-asset deals to the leader of a team of lawyers, and then being the lead of a team of domestic and international lawyers on complex multi-national deals. With each milestone, I felt I’d “made it” just a bit more. Hopefully, career milestones representing increased challenges and higher levels of “success” are still ahead of me.

What are the challenges of being a woman in a field highly dominated by men?

There have always been challenges for women working in commercial real estate. Whether you are a real estate lawyer, advisor, or other real estate professional, the field has historically been dominated by men, which can sometimes make it more difficult for women to advance. I would guess that virtually all women in real estate have experienced gender bias of some sort in their careers, whether it is the challenge of getting assigned to a deal, getting the opportunity to be the lead on the deal, or getting acknowledged for their contributions. Early in my career, I participated as the junior lawyer on transactions where men would constantly ask me to “pardon their language” and continually apologize for something they said. I was the only woman on the

team, and also the only woman lawyer — all of which clearly made them uncomfortable. Women can't allow bias like that to define or limit them. By establishing their expertise and skill, women can insist on a place at the table.

What strategies did you use to overcome these challenges?

Overcoming a lack of opportunity for advancement requires determination and dedication. Hard work, excellent skills, and persistence are necessary. But those features aren't enough — women must be confident and not underestimate their value, regardless of perceived bias. I realized early in my career that my success would depend on my own efforts and not on opportunities or advancements being gifted to me. Eventually, clients recognized the value I added and asked for me on their legal team, which resulted in increased opportunities. Getting a seat at the table requires hard work and demonstrated skill. It may also involve some luck — which you have to make for yourself!

What are some mistakes that you've made along the way that taught you important lessons about your career?

The most important lesson is to be confident and not underestimate yourself. Regardless of what anyone says, you can overcome any challenge and earn your position by hard work and perseverance.

What else should our readers know about this topic?

Hopefully, hiring more women and including women in management positions are gradually eroding the old biases, which enhances opportunities for women.