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2020 Women in Business

2020 Women in Business Awards: Lisa Spencer, Henson Efron

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Seen as leader in the national community of family law attorneys, Henson Efron President Lisa Spencer has been instrumental in creating a work culture at the firm's Minneapolis office that promotes work-life balance while driving growth and recognition for the organization.

As an attorney, she's become known and respected for her integrity and fairness, with a specialty in complex divorce cases for high-net-worth clients. She's represented international celebrities, professional athletes and high-profile executives, all with a focus on civility and effective resolution.

One notable example, Gill v. Gill in 2018, came before the Minnesota Supreme Court and ultimately received an affirmance that post-decree earn-out payments for the sale of a business acquired during marriage are



NANCY KUEHN | MSPBJ

Lisa Spencer of Henson Efron is a 2020 Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal Women in Business honoree.

considered marital property. Not only did this provide a positive result for her client, but it will also impact family law in the state for years to come.

Spencer sees clients during some of the most difficult transitions of their lives, and her emphasis on providing purposeful, compassionate guidance provides an example to follow in the family law community.

More from our honoree ...

How has the coronavirus pandemic affected you? The first effect — complete chaos! But as things settled down, I started noticing small, good things. For example, I never realized I had hummingbirds in my backyard, and I confess to being happily distracted by them while remotely working from my deck. The “commute” to the home office is definitely short, allowing for a merger of work/life balance throughout the day. I love stepping out for a walk or quick chat with a neighbor. But I miss the collaboration of my people in a room together. Video conferencing is fine for now, but it hinders spontaneity of thought and innovation. I look forward to the day when it is safe for us to be together again.

What is your greatest strength? I think I have a healthy EQ [emotional intelligence]. It definitely helps in my line of work. My clients are typically at an emotional low point in their lives when they come to see me. It’s my job to empathize, but also give them objective legal advice. And to guide them in making decisions with their long-term future in mind, rather than the emotion of the present moment.

What is the greatest hurdle you’ve overcome? Developing that personal EQ. I had a hot temper as a child and young adult, and did a lot of work managing it.

What was your breakthrough moment? I don’t think there was a specific breakthrough moment, but instead a steady roll. I forced myself to take speaking engagements to get over a fear of speaking in public. It was painful, but the more I did it, the more comfortable I became speaking with

confidence, and the more people started to recognize me. That confidence and recognition led to leadership opportunities, and the ball kept rolling from there.

What is the most important challenge women face today? Implicit gender bias continues to insidiously exist in the workforce, politics and the media. We can rage against the glass ceiling or we can make an end-run around it. Sometimes rage is necessary, but I personally prefer the end-run.

What advice would you give young women today? Don't second-guess your value but don't assume it either. Nothing worth value comes without hard work. Hard work opens doors, and every door that opens leads to another.

Quick hits

President, Henson Efron

Education: Juris Doctor, William Mitchell College of Law

Family: Husband, Robert; daughter, Grace; son, Liam

Board memberships and volunteer activities: President, American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, Minnesota Chapter; chairwoman, 4th District Ethics Committee