

Redefining Leadership: Tips and tools for accelerating positive change in chambers and the courtroom

Friday, October 18, 2024
2:00 – 3:15 PM



Join us for an interactive training and vibrant discussion that will redefine everything you thought you knew about leadership. As leaders in our profession, we have the potential to drive positive change, achieve our missions, and build thriving organizations. Yet leadership training in the legal profession is rare and often lacking. Sharpen your skills and learn research-based practices that will unleash your leadership potential and discover additional resources to support your leadership growth. Panelists include Laney Whitcanack, CEO of Northern California Coro, the nation’s premier leadership training organization, Sheila Birnbaum, renowned litigator and mediator, founder of the Women’s Leadership Institute at NYU Law, and Sarah London, Partner at Lieff Cabraser and Co-Lead Counsel in the Juul and Uber Multi-District Litigations.

SPEAKERS:



Sheila Birnbaum, Mediator & Arbitrator, Phillips ADR Enterprises

Sheila is joining Phillips ADR after a 45-year career litigating complex product liability, class actions, mass tort MDLs, and insurance coverage cases. As one of the country’s preeminent defense lawyers, Sheila has served as national counsel or lead counsel for numerous Fortune 500 companies. She has led the Product Liability and Mass Torts groups at Skadden, Quinn Emanuel, and Dechert, earning recognition from Courts, clients, and even adversaries for her outstanding leadership and dispute

resolution skills.

As national co-counsel for Purdue Pharma in thousands of federal and state lawsuits brought by state attorneys general, cities, municipalities, third- party payers, and others, Sheila helped negotiate unique resolutions of the claims, establishing settlement funds that would be used to treat individuals addicted to opioids.

After serving as the court-appointed Mediator in federal court to resolve the claims of 92 families of victims of the 2001 World Trade Center terrorist attack, Judge Hellerstein (SDNY) extolled Sheila’s efforts, noting that “without her patience, skill, empathy and persistence, [the \$500 million] settlement would not have been achieved.” Thereafter, Attorney General Holder appointed Sheila to serve as

Special Master of the reactivated September 11th Victim Compensation Fund, which was to address the claims of first responders and others who claimed injuries associated with the 9/11 attacks. In making the appointment, General Holder stated that “Sheila Birnbaum brings extensive experience, credibility, and unique insight to this important role.” Over the five years of her tenure as Special Master, Sheila designed the Fund’s framework and oversaw the distribution of nearly \$2 billion.

Sheila has argued – and won – three cases in the United States Supreme Court, including the landmark decision in *State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company*, where the Supreme Court reversed a \$145 million punitive damage award, finding it unconstitutionally excessive. This decision established the current framework by which courts analyze the permissible limits of punitive damage awards. Sheila also won a unanimous victory in *Warger v. Shauers*, resolving a longstanding split in the Circuit courts over the application of Federal Rule of Evidence 606(b), which generally prohibits testimony of jurors about statements made during deliberations when the testimony is offered in an inquiry into the validity of a verdict. *Buckley v. Metro North*, a landmark case involving claims for medical monitoring.



Sarah London, Partner, Lieff Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein

Lieff Cabraser partner Sarah London is a true leader in the plaintiffs’ bar and a determined, skilled, and experienced advocate for the injured, employees, and consumers. Sarah has risen to national prominence as a result of appointments to and success in leadership roles in multiple pivotal lawsuits, including as Co-Lead & Liaison Counsel for plaintiffs in the Juul injury/predatory marketing MDL, where her work led to four historic settlements announced in late 2022 with defendant Juul as well as a

comprehensive and historic \$235 million settlement that was reached between additional defendant Altria and plaintiffs in the midst of a subsequent JUUL bellwether trial. In 2020, Sarah was appointed to the Plaintiffs’ Executive Committee in the Gilead HIV Drug Kidney & Bone Injuries Litigation, and in 2019, Sarah was named Subclass Settlement Counsel in *In re Flint Water Cases*. Sarah also serves in lead roles in multiple women’s health cases, including as Liaison Counsel in the state court coordinated proceedings involving the destruction of hundreds of frozen eggs and embryos at San Francisco’s Pacific Fertility Center.



Laney Whitcanack, CEO, Coro Northern California

Under Laney’s leadership, Coro has created more than 20 new programs and partnerships, increasing our program reach and impact across Northern California. With more than 20 years of experience as a social impact leader in the nonprofit, public, and private sectors, Laney has a rich history with Coro. She graduated from the flagship Fellows Program in Public Affairs in the 1990s and was Director of Community Programs in the early 2000s.

Before returning to Coro as CEO in 2016, Laney was a founder and executive in the tech sector. She frequently speaks and writes about leadership, social impact, and value visibility. Laney lives in San Francisco with her husband, two children, and one mischievous dog.