

Podcast: #WhyMcGlinchey? Path to Partnership with Matt Manning

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The path to partnership looks different for every lawyer. During today's installment of the #WhyMcGlinchey Path to Partnership series, we'll talk with Matt Manning about why he has chosen to grow his career here at McGlinchey, from Associate to Office Managing Member.

Margeaux Roush: Welcome to the #WhyMcGlinchey series of the More with McGlinchey podcast, where we'll talk about why our attorneys decide to join, stay, and grow their practices here at McGlinchey. I'm **Margeaux Roush**, Director of Talent Acquisition, and joining me today for the next installment of this series is **Matt Manning** (Houston). Matt has been practicing with the firm for 10 years and is the Managing Member of the Houston office. Hi, Matt.

Matt Manning: Hey, Margeaux. How are you?

Margeaux Roush: Great! So Matt, let's start at the beginning of your journey here at McGlinchey. Tell us a little bit about how you came to join the firm, where you were before, and what made you want to join *us*.

Matt Manning: First off, thanks so much for having me. Where I was before McGlinchey is, I actually started out with a small law firm in Clear Lake, which is a suburb on the south part of Houston. And I clerked with them through law school. When I came out of law school, it was in 2009 and it was after the housing crisis, and so things were difficult for attorneys, particularly for people in the legal industry. But I was fortunate to have that preexisting relationship with that small law firm. It's about six or seven attorneys, and I was able to start doing contract work with them. They were primarily family and criminal practitioners, and I'd always had an interest more in civil litigation. I got some good exposure to criminal and family law there and was able to determine that that wasn't really for me, which was a good thing. I think it's beneficial to be exposed to a lot of different areas of practice, but again, not necessarily my path on those two practice areas.

Fortunately they did have enough civil litigation to get me some exposure to that as well. And I was able to go into court a number of times, even as a young attorney, and argue motions, which I think is really beneficial when you're first starting out, to get that courtroom exposure. And fortunately, I ended up going up against a more experienced attorney in a hearing on a motion for summary judgment. I was able to, in my view (I ended

up arguing with her over the years, but in my view), I prevailed at that. And the attorney that I went up against had her own firm and she thought I did well enough, so she offered me a job as an associate.

So I joined her firm. She was primarily a practitioner in bankruptcy and creditors' rights and did, pretty much exclusively, civil litigation, which was great. I learned a lot there and I was there for about two and a half years, but with her being a solo practitioner, there was only so much growth opportunity within that practice. And so a friend of mine had actually had someone reach out to him about opportunity at McGlinchey Stafford. He was with a small firm as well, larger than where I was at, obviously, with being with a solo practitioner. His firm probably had, I don't know, 14, 15 attorneys. At the time, he was comfortable there, so wasn't looking to make a move. But he knew that I wanted to try and expand. I'd always maybe desired to see if I could hack it at a larger firm.

And so he let me know about that opportunity. I applied and interviewed with Dwayne Danner and Jeff Seewald and eventually got a job as an Associate in the Houston office. This was in 2012. The fun part about that story is that the friend of mine who referred me to the firm actually did end up wanting to move a little bit later on in his career. And he came and eventually joined McGlinchey as well. Because, you know, I had told him how much I enjoyed it and how great a place it was. So that's where I was before and how I came to be here.

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Margeaux Roush: Well, thank you, Matt. And, like me, you mentioned that you graduated from law school in a very tough job market. I graduated from law school in 2008, you graduated in 2009. Finding a job was really tough in that particular timeframe. So tell me about how that really affected your career goals, and shaped what you were really looking to do.

Matt Manning: Sure. Thanks. Graduating a tough legal market, yeah, it was difficult. Everybody was still grappling with the housing bubble bursting and the economic downturn there. But like I mentioned, I had always sort of envisioned myself working at a larger firm, and seeing if I could meet the demands of an Associate, you know, maybe in a national practice. And so that had always been a goal, and fortunately, I was able to work my way there. And as I first started at McGlinchey, my goal from really from day one was to try and make Member (Partner), then maybe continue on and develop my own book and my practice and mentor other Associates. Fortunately, I was able to do all of those things. I was able to get exposure to a number of different practice areas in my time as an Associate, primarily though, financial services litigation with some great mentors.

I was elevated to membership in 2019. And then here recently, I was even more fortunate to be appointed the Managing Member of the Houston office (which was something that, if you told me coming out of law school that I'd be leading an office in about a decade, I'd have probably laughed at you.)

Again, there was a lot of work involved, it certainly wasn't overnight – about seven years or so to make Member, which I think is pretty typical. I also, like I said, had fantastic mentors who helped me get there. As I mentioned, when I initially interviewed, I interviewed with Dwayne Danner and Jeff Seewald, and had specific clients that we were working on, that I was working on with them, and learned a ton about how to practice from those two gentlemen. And still do, Dwayne's the Managing Member of the Dallas office and Jeff is out in our Irvine office.

So I still go to them with questions. And then later on, as I was progressing, I started working more with members like Michael Ferachi, our Managing Member, and Anthony Rollo, and learned a lot from them as well. So, you know, I've developed as an attorney and my skillset, but I also appreciate that McGlinchey afforded me the opportunity to do so.

I'm proud of being a McGlinchey attorney. And I think I'm a pretty good judge of the different areas of practice, because I've had exposure to being in a small firm. I've had exposure to being with a solo practitioner, and then now with a law firm that has a national practice. So to me, McGlinchey is just about the right size to provide top-flight, sophisticated representation for clients in a variety of practice areas. But by the same token, it affords attorneys who are with the firm a little bit of work-life flexibility, which is a big thing right now, what with the pandemic and working remotely. So I'm really pleased that I got to be with McGlinchey and develop to the point of being where I am today.

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Margeaux Roush: I love that you had great experience with mentors, and I'd really like for you to tell me a little bit more about that whole mentorship piece. So, when you were an associate here and trying to develop your own clients, develop your book, tell me a little bit about how that experience was for you. Did you feel like the firm supported you? Did you have the tools? Tell me a little bit about what the firm did to help you in that direction.

Matt Manning: You know, McGlinchey was incredibly supportive. Part of being an attorney is building relationships with people, companies, clients, so that they trust you with your legal matters. Clients these days have an increasingly wide range of options for legal services. And so being able to effectively sell yourself, your abilities, and your firm is becoming more and more important as time goes on. You can have a great career just managing legal matters for other attorneys, and I've certainly seen number of people do that. But if you're the type of person who wants to be out and out meeting people and acting as a thought leader in your practice area, I really can't imagine a better place than McGlinchey to be able to do that. That's not just a focus for our, our partners, our members. When I was an Associate, McGlinchey University lunch and learns were a big part of what developed me into having the practice area knowledge and the business acumen to be able to go out there and try and develop business, speak to prospective clients, give presentations – just, pretty much everything that you need in the modern practice of law, to be able to be a fine practicing attorney, as well as somebody who can engage in business development and land clients.

So it's not everywhere, I think, that you can go to have that sort of thing happen. It happened for me here at McGlinchey. It still happens. And I try to pass on that same opportunity, that same ability to learn and develop, to our Associates in the Houston office and across the firm.

Margeaux Roush: Matt, a number of things that you said are, are the keys to why McGlinchey is such a great place for all of us to be. The firm is truly focused on the fact that the associates we hire now are, hopefully, going to be the future of the firm tomorrow. So tell me a little bit more about what aspects of your time at McGlinchey been crucial to your own personal success.

There's value in being able to recognize your limitations and being okay with somebody else taking the lead on something. The most junior Associate on a case might come up with an idea that could win the whole shooting match, so why not listen to him?

Matt Manning: One thing that's pretty crucial is being smart enough to know that I'm not always smart enough to know what I need to know. A willingness to fail, a healthy ability to keep plugging away after that failure. To my first point, again, I was lucky enough to learn from attorneys who are just fantastic practitioners of the law. Hopefully one day I'll have that level of ability. But now I'm similarly blessed to work with a number of attorneys who, even though they may be junior to me in their time spent as an attorney, they've got a passion for the law, and sometimes they come up with things I don't always see. There's value in being able to recognize your limitations and being okay with somebody else taking the lead on something.

As a litigator, I'm frequently exposed to some really smart people who are used to being right and being in control. That's all well and good, but if you're pretty well convinced that you are never wrong, eventually, that's going to catch up with you. Plus you aren't as open to evolving and growing with that kind of mindset. So the most junior associate on a case, for instance, might be able to come up with an idea that could win the whole shooting match, so why not listen to him?

Speaking of growing and evolving, that probably kind of takes me back to my second point, which is that you usually learn more from setbacks than you do from successes. No one is perfect. It's like in football, which I'm a big fan of, and so I think about it quite a bit. I try and take it from the mindset of a quarterback throwing a pick. You've got to think about what you did wrong, so you don't do it again, but then you've also got to shrug off the disappointment and get right back in the game and keep throwing, right? So I think that aspect has served me really well in my career. You learn more from failure than from success, but you've also got to keep plugging.

Margeaux Roush: Those are all excellent points. And I know we've covered a lot of ground. What else do you think sets McGlinchey apart, based on your personal experience here at the firm?

Matt Manning: Well, I'm beginning to sound like a broken record here, but mentorship, support, exposure to some very capable attorneys, plus the King Cakes and a little Louisiana character doesn't hurt! Maybe all law firms have smart lawyers who are willing to teach their Associates how to excel at their jobs, but I know from personal experience that that's the case here at McGlinchey.

Not only that, but McGlinchey has a lot of hardworking people other than just attorneys that contribute to us as a successful, fun, and engaging place to work. I've learned a ton from our executive management: recruiting staff, like you, Margeaux, marketing and business development teams, support staff – just everyone. I've learned about the business of a law firm, and that's maybe even more than I've learned about being an attorney. Having a firm that's big enough to have resources to take on the largest and most complex legal matters, but not so large that you don't know who you work with – that's something that I'd be really surprised to hear that anybody wouldn't be interested in. Not only that, but firm-wide Super Bowl squares? How cool is that?

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Margeaux Roush: We do try and bring a little fun. So thank you for the bringing up those points. We have an incredible team at McGlinchey on the administrative side that does bring a lot to understanding the business of a law firm. I also think that our firm culture plays a key role in why attorneys choose to stay here. I think our firm is really unique in some ways, because we have put a premium on firm culture and integration and inclusivity at McGlinchey. And it's rewarding to know that that's seen by people like you. So thank you for sharing that. Speaking of unique, how do you think your experience has been different from your peers, or, has it been different from the other firms where you have worked? the state workers' comp laws?

Matt Manning: It's a little hard for me to answer that because the two firms I was at previously were so much smaller than McGlinchey. It's a little bit of an apples/oranges comparison, but I do have conversations with peers in the legal field. There's a pretty broad set of experience that I've heard about. What I can tell you is that in a month or so, as you mentioned earlier, that I'll have been with McGlinchey for a decade. And while no one knows for certain what the future holds, I don't really see a future in which I'm not a McGlinchey man. We're in a time where (and you know this better than anybody!) lateral movement is rampant, and being with one place for that long is starting to become a little bit more rare. But with a firm like this one to me, it's just as rare. So there you go.

Margeaux Roush: Well, Matt, you know, I'm a big supporter of yours and I'm always happy to hear that you want to stay here and continue to help us grow. You've been particularly active in recent years with recruiting and mentoring and bring a very valuable perspective to the table in that particular role. If you were to give yourself as a younger lawyer, some advice based on looking back at your 10 years, what are some of the things that you would want to share with yourself as a younger lawyer to get you through the losses, the bad times, to help you keep throwing the ball down the field?

Matt Manning: Yeah, it's probably a whole bunch of trite sayings, right? But they're trite because they're true. Set your goals, then put your head down and fight to get them. Find a good mentor and stick to them. Don't sweat the small stuff. You asked for one, but I'm going to give you a bunch.

Margeaux Roush: I want them all!

"Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good." Attorneys can be really hard on themselves, but you need, in some instances, to let that go. You've gotten where you are for a reason.

Matt Manning: Okay. Don't be afraid to fail. Learn from your setbacks. One that I particularly like that I got from a mentor of mine is, "don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good." Sometimes we have a bad habit, as attorneys, we want to make sure that every comma is in the right place. But at some point you need to just go with it. A lot of times, if you put that much work and effort into it, you're going to be surprised at where you get. I don't suppose that saying was original to that mentor of mine, but "paralysis from analysis" is A Thing.

Attorneys are taught from the beginning of law school to run down every loose end, but you've got to get the job done in the end. Attorneys, as a natural thing, can be really, really hard on themselves, right? It was competitive in law school. It's a competitive career. And so you want to make sure that that last period isn't italicized, but you need in some instances to let that go. You've gotten to the point that you are for a reason. I think that's really hard for Associates at the beginning, striving so hard to be the best they can be, which is great, and I'm an advocate of that. But sometimes you've got to realize that you made it here for a reason, and that you're good at what you're doing. And that's really helpful.

Margeaux Roush: Excellent. Well, all of those are excellent points and you're right. Some of the sayings that we all know are out there, and we all know them because they're generally true. They definitely apply to life here at McGlinchey as a lawyer. So I really appreciate you taking the time to share some insight with us and share your experience with us today. So thank you for that. And we look forward to you being a McGlinchey man for a good long while.

Matt Manning: Thanks so much, Margeaux. I really appreciate it.

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