

## 2021 RISING STAR

# Lauren M. Colasacco

Lauren Colasacco has taken a lead role in negotiating multibillion-dollar mergers, public offerings for special purpose acquisition companies, and privatization transactions on behalf of her private equity clients, landing the Kirkland & Ellis partner a spot among the under-40 private equity law practitioners recognized by Law360 as Rising Stars.

## Why she became a private equity attorney:

As a junior associate, she said, she found that private equity clients displayed remarkable vision and ingenuity, and a commitment to crafting new and better deal structures. “I like being on the cutting edge,” she said.

Colasacco also believes that the innovative clients and deal structures that first drew her to private equity transactions is also the key to her growth as an attorney.

“Oftentimes, it’s our private equity clients who are pushing us to try new structures and technologies and new ways of doing things,” she said. That encouragement, plus the camaraderie

and teamwork that develops over a transaction, keeps her going through the “late nights and hard weeks” that the job demands.

## Interesting deals she’s recently worked on:

Colasacco works routinely with private equity firms to sponsor SPACs, also known as blank-check companies, which are shell entities that raise money through an IPO to fund an acquisition. She had a hand in guiding a SPAC and its targeted acquisition, supply chain software company E2Open, from private equity-backed cocoon to publicly traded butterfly.

After advising blank-check firm CC Neuberger during its 2020 IPO, Colasacco was among the Kirkland attorneys who represented the firm in its \$2.6 billion go-public transaction with E2Open, then worked with the newly public company in its own \$1.7B tie-up with a competing firm.

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“It’s been very interesting to see a [SPAC] right from its IPO going through the process of finding a target, and then working with that company as a public company to take it through an M&A transaction on its own,” she said.

### **Interesting deals she’s recently worked on:**

Colasacco was quick to highlight her extensive history of negotiating leveraged buyouts on behalf of the Blackstone Group.

“I represent Blackstone a fair bit,” Colasacco said. “That includes bread-and-butter LBO-style transactions, including ones that I’ve seen through from when they acquired the portfolio company.”

Colasacco said her work with Blackstone extends well beyond leveraged buyouts. In fact, her Blackstone work took her to

the opposite end of a SPAC IPO transaction. In January, she helped craft a \$7.3 billion deal between the Blackstone-owned benefits administration company Alight Solutions and blank-check firm Foley Trasimene Acquisition Corp.

This deal-making versatility, Colasacco said, lies at the heart of her professional identity.

“I don’t just do kind of your bread-and-butter PE work,” she said. “I’m able to represent sponsors and in all facets of the transactions that they do in the M&A market.”

### **Interesting deals she’s recently worked on:**

Although she wishes she had a crystal ball, Colasacco believes that private equity and mergers and acquisitions attorneys will continue to be pushed away from orthodox transactions toward new deal structures.

“I’m definitely seeing sponsors engaging in fewer cookie-cutter LBO transactions and doing more consortium deals, getting involved in stocks, doing other kinds of financing transactions,” she said. “I think the M&A practice as a whole just needs to be ready to adapt to new structures, new markets, keep up to speed on what’s going on in the capital market space, because our sponsor clients are doing a lot of deals that touch on that space. And I don’t really see that stopping.”

In the end, Colasacco said, M&A attorneys must match their PE clients’ energy and eagerness to innovate.

“Continued learning is not going to stop anytime soon. We’re definitely going to see our PE clients continuing to push the limit of what we know, and I think we’re going to keep seeing new structures and new types of deals.”

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