



LAW360

2017 MVP

Nicole Greenblatt

Kirkland & Ellis LLP's Nicole Greenblatt successfully guided the reorganization of shoe retailer Payless ShoeSource Inc. this summer in a case that gave struggling brick-and-mortar operations hope for survival in an increasingly precarious industry, earning her a spot on *Law360*'s list of Bankruptcy MVPs for 2017.

Her biggest accomplishment this year:

As retailers continue to stream into bankruptcy court amid increasing competition from online sellers and burdensome legacy costs, Payless' successful restructuring stands out as an example of the options available to large companies. After filing for Chapter 11 protection in April with a prepackaged plan of reorganization and having that plan confirmed on a largely consensual basis in July, Payless was able to shave \$450 million of debt from its balance sheet in a debt-for-equity swap.

"It was one of the first retail bankruptcies to successfully reorganize," Greenblatt said. "It set the playbook for best practices in tackling some of the legal and operational issues that come to loggerheads in retail cases."

"People can look to it as a playbook," she said. "Retail will continue to be a troubled sector for the foreseeable future. It is important in retail cases to try and expedite your time in bankruptcy. Having an exit strategy sends a very positive message to the market and your trade partners."

Her biggest challenge this year:

With large clients like Payless, which entered bankruptcy with 4,400 locations, and Caesars Entertainment Operating Co. Inc., the country's largest casino operator with 37 gaming and resort properties in 14 states, Greenblatt dealt with some complex issues in her representations this year.

The shoe retailer was able to exit from about 700 of its unprofitable stores through the bankruptcy process, while Caesars was able to restructure \$18 billion in debt

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through various litigation settlements and a spinoff of its real estate into a tax-free, creditor-owned real estate investment trust. Managing the sometimes divergent goals of multiple parties during insolvency proceedings can be a laborious task, she said.

"The challenge is almost always about bringing people together to come to a solution," Greenblatt said. "I view the practice to be about driving solutions to complex

problems. You get to collaborate with people with the best and brightest minds in the business — both our clients and the legal and financial advisers we work with.”

What motivates her:

Clients come to Greenblatt during times of crisis and trust her to help guide them through a process that could mean the survival or death of a corporation, with the fates of employees, creditors and stockholders hanging in the balance. She relishes the opportunity to confront the financial and strategic issues facing her clients and getting to the end of the road as efficiently as possible.

“I basically get to problem-solve for a living,” she said. “I love what I do. At its core, restructuring work is all about consensus-building and developing creative solutions to complex problems. At this level of sophistication, you can really make a difference in turning companies around, and you get to be a

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trusted adviser to the boards and management teams we work with.”

Her advice for future bankruptcy attorneys:

A client won’t place the future of their company into the hands of just any attorney when insolvency looms, and Greenblatt advises aspiring restructuring attorneys to work hard for those clients to earn respect and trust.

“Integrity is incredibly important in this practice. Deals tend to get cut faster and cheaper when there is a level of trust among the parties

involved,” she said. “It is also a unique industry in terms of the friendships we make with the people we work with. You really are in the trenches working in crisis mode, sometimes for years. That develops the trust.”



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