

INTERVIEWED BY : THE LAW TEAM

INTERVIEW WITH

# JACQUELINE SAAD

EXECUTIVE PARTNER AT SHAHID LAW FIRM

What was the route you took that led to you becoming a partner at one of the top firms in the region at such a young age? How did you do it?

Let me start by saying that I consider the role of being a partner to be a responsibility, not a trophy. Prior to joining Shahid Law Firm, and at a young age, I was studying and working simultaneously; co-running a small family business. Driven by my own ambition and inspired by the numerous challenges I had to deal with, my managerial, negotiation, and technical skills were progressively being honed.

For me, qualifying for the executive partner role is the reflection of my long journey of hard work and relentless efforts. That was complemented by education, experience, and knowledge along with exposure to civil and common law systems as well as different cultures, while completing my master's degrees in Cairo and Brussels. Moreover, working closely with the firm's chairman and founding partner for several years and overseeing the firm's business functions, qualified me for becoming a partner at such a young age.

A long time ago, Shahid Law Firm, being a top firm in the region, set the example of inclusive leadership by having a symbiotic relationship with its young members. This initiative boosted my ambition and played the most significant role by encouraging me to develop myself. I was able to master new skills and techniques as well as constantly increase my professional visibility and exposure. In my opinion, this is the ideal environment where any passionate lawyer would flourish and shine, and in return, we, the young leaders, are paying it forward by leading the firm into becoming a better business.

Being successful in a tough profession like yours requires a lot of dedication and hard work. Can you tell us about the obstacles you faced throughout your career that helped you learn the most?

Had there not been obstacles, success would have been tasteless. Success could not be attained without setting a daily target and maybe



even a lifetime target. Alongside my full dedication, I have put my hearty efforts in each single moment ever since I chose to pursue this tough profession. I also had to develop a stable level of maturity and extraordinary approaches to overcome the challenges associated with my profession.

Thinking beyond the mainstream and possessing the right tools and skills have greatly contributed to how I approach complex business issues and challenges in a structured and methodological manner. Shahid Law Firm has always been my second home; I have always learned to be loyal to my career, and I am being rewarded now.

You were recently recognized by Legal 500 in the healthcare sector. What advice would you give someone who may want to pursue a similar path? Also, how do you see the developments of this sector in light of the global pandemic?

It is a great honor to receive such an important recognition along with being noted as one of the firm's outstanding practitioners in the healthcare sector. I am privileged to be one of the very few attorneys in Egypt who handles a wide spectrum of pharma multinational clients.

**" NOTHING THAT IS WORTH DOING IS EVER EASY "**

The big challenge is to understand the dynamics and sensitivities of the pharmaceutical business. This sector is unique and requires its counsel to have a significant knowledge of the industry, stakeholders, and experience in all fields of law. Daily support to pharmaceutical companies is crucial and ranges from labor issues to litigation as well as complex M&A transactions.

Being responsive with good business sense was always an asset. Maintaining the updates with regards to the fast-growing changes in regulatory and legal matters in this dynamic sector, along with maintaining the right contacts at the governmental level, in addition to providing high quality and efficacious legal advice, all contributed to being the type of lawyer clients can rely on.

During this global pandemic, the healthcare sector faced many challenges and unprecedented evolutions. However, pharma multinationals cooperated to work with our government, along with private businesses, to promote better health schemes and innovative initiatives to provide a better life for our beloved country and the globe. The sector has greatly progressed, in every direction, whether in terms of efforts exerted, laws promulgated, or entities established, to pull together all available resources and instruments, both legal and governmental, to find ways to deal with this global health crisis.

I can tell that you branched out your experience to include many areas like aviation, insurance, banking, employment, and TMT. What benefits do you see in multi-specialization?

Multi-specialization has been very beneficial since the beginning of my career. Exploring different areas of law has diversified my legal expertise in many ways. Having such exposure and experience enhances my knowledge and ensures my competency when dealing with complex transactions and embracing different areas of law.

In order to become a successful female lawyer, what challenges did you face in your professional career as a woman?

Law is a male-dominated field, which creates a lot of pressure for aspiring female lawyers, holding them back from pursuing this career. One can say that the standards set for women could be higher than those for men. Once, a banker asked me what I am doing in such a male-dominated competitive field, my reply was that I have never thought of my career that way, and I strongly believe that my efforts and diligence will be recognized, regardless of my gender.

The main obstacle I faced as a woman when I pursued this professional career was how to maintain an active personal life and my social participation in a positive manner.

I never crossed paths with someone without utilizing the full experience to make a positive impact. This professional career ultimately rewarded me when I started mentoring new generations by conveying related experiences, methods, and techniques. I make sure that I have a daily busy schedule and that no day would pass without having an objective, even if it is a tiny one.

It is visible in our daily lives that males and females in the legal field do not have equal footings. From your point of view, how do you see this changing in the future?

Competition exists in every workplace and every career, so my concern was never focused on a gender distinction, but the challenge was to focus on being a reliable, efficient, and competent lawyer.

I believe things began to change and there is a global trend towards gender equality and fighting against discrimination. Of course, inequality will not end overnight, but this is the golden chance for female lawyers to contribute to this change and have a significant impact on the field. It is an immense opportunity that women should take advantage of.

Many women face an internal conundrum as they grow in their career concerning what sacrifices have to be made and whether it will eventually be worth it. How did you balance your life and were there any trade-offs that you had to make? Was it all worth it?

It is not easy having a full-time job while juggling your responsibilities of being a good wife and mother. But nothing that is worth doing is ever easy, otherwise it would have already been done, right?

Organization and time management are keys to achieve the perfect balance. This contributed to my success, while also allowing me to be available in my daughter's life, and at the same time, have some quality time for myself. I was surrounded by family and friends extending a helping hand at home and at work, which mitigated stresses and tough times. What was not easy at all was to start every day in my life as a completely new page, but in the end, it was all worth it.

Every successful person has a reason behind their success. What is the reason behind yours and who are you grateful to in this journey?

To discover yourself at such a young age, your life immediately is filled with dreams and hopes. God granted me many opportunities that helped me discover myself, for which I am grateful. During this long journey, I had some of my dreams coming true and sometimes even more. I am grateful to my dad for starting my journey at a young age. My ultimate hope is for my late dad to be proud while watching my everyday success. I always felt grateful and proud to see my daughter, big girl, and friend, steadily growing in front of me and rising like a shining star. This was a unique success in parallel to that of my dream of reaching the height of this career, which kept me full of pride. I am forever grateful to our Chairman for his lifetime support and relentless encouragement.

What advice would you give your younger self and all the other young ambitious women out there?

I have not only been dedicated and passionate since I decided to pursue this dynamic career, but also eager and enthusiastic. Thus, to my younger self, I say that pursuing a law career was a difficult path, per se, that had required a lot of dedication and relentless hard work. Not all days are entirely good, but there is at least some good each day.

To all the aspiring young women out there, stay truly passionate about what you are doing and embrace the fact that without challenges, there would be no room to grow and shine.