

2024 Women in CRE: Christine O’Connell, King & Spalding



Name:
Christine O’Connell

Title:
Partner, Real Estate & Funds

Company:
King & Spalding

Why should this nominee be recognized in our Women in Commercial Real Estate Spotlight?

“Christine O’Connell is not only one of the most talented women in our field, she represents the most powerhouse real estate lenders at a time when the industry has experienced significant distress. Clients trust Christine to navigate these market challenges strategically and thoughtfully. Her knowledge and experience have made her one of the industry’s go-to attorneys for CMBS transactions and loan workouts, and her professionalism, insight and resulting superior client relations have placed her at the top of our field.” - *Jennifer Morgan, Partner, Corporate Finance & Investments at King & Spalding.*

What recent project, transaction, or accomplishment are you most proud of?

I’m most proud of a recent, nine-month workout and ultimate exercise of remedies under a complicated senior and mezzanine loan transaction on behalf of a confidential client. This was an extremely complex deal that involved several sophisticated parties, including some of the world’s most prominent real estate funds and investors.

This particular transaction required a delicate touch and sensitivity in navigating several long-standing relationships between the parties involved. Our client, and each of the executives involved, were reliant on our ability to take an extremely nuanced approach and demonstrate best-in-class relationship management in order to get the transaction over the finish line.

Who inspires you most? What qualities do they possess that inspire you?

Jeannie Bionda, my first mentor and a partner at my first law firm, who I worked with for over a decade, starting from when I was a junior attorney many years ago. Her advice and counsel have been a beacon of inspiration and guidance throughout my career. About five years ago, Jeannie unfortunately lost her battle to cancer but not a day goes by that I don’t think about how she would deal with a challenge that I’m confronted with.

Jeannie was strong-willed and could stand her ground when needed. She also understood the importance of building relationships across the table, and always treated clients and adversaries with the utmost respect. She cared about her clients like they were her friends and unabashedly strived to be the best. Not just the best woman but the best, period.

What are the most important factors young women should consider when choosing a firm to build their career with?

Be authentic! Don’t try to fit the mold of what a good professional, or even what a good female professional should be. Own your femininity with pride, and surround yourself with people who champion you and your talents.