

## How I Made Partner: 'Invest in Your Relationships With Colleagues,' Says Brian French of Cooley

By ALM Staff

October 4, 2024

**Brian French, 39, Partner at Cooley LLP, New York, New York**

**Practice area:** Business litigation

**Law school and year of graduation:** Georgetown University Law Center, 2013

*The following has been edited for style.*

**How long have you been at the firm?**

Four and a half years. I joined Cooley in October 2019.

**What was your criteria in selecting your current firm?**

Like many associates, I wanted more courtroom experience without sacrificing case quality. I also wanted a firm that aligned with my values and would support my growth. Add in Cooley's entrepreneurial culture and dynamic client platform, and the firm checked every box.

**Were you an associate at another firm before joining your present firm? If so, which one and how long were you there?**

I was an associate at Cravath for five years. Before that, I clerked for Judge Mary Beck Briscoe of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit.

**What do you think was the deciding point for the firm in making you partner? Was it your performance on a specific case? A**



Courtesy photo

BRIAN FRENCH OF COOLEY.

**personality trait? Making connections with the right people?**

I work hard, and I've developed a reputation for brief-writing, courtroom advocacy, and strategic thinking. But relationships got me here. People. Since I joined Cooley, I've been fortunate to work with talented partners who are not only prominent within the firm, but also generous with their mentorship and support. Just as importantly, and consistent with the firm's culture of inclusivity, Cooley takes upward feedback very seriously, and I've always prioritized mentoring and empowering associates.

**Who had or has the greatest influence in your career and why?**

From Cooley colleagues and mentors, to other great trial lawyers, to my own family—I've learned too much from too many to choose just one.

**What advice would you give an associate who wants to make partner?**

Litigation skills can be honed like any other. Just as professional athletes and musicians practice or rehearse on their own, find time to refine your core litigation skills outside of your casework. And yes, I realize how that sounds to someone in the midst of a particularly busy month (or year). But when personal and professional responsibilities permit, dedicate time to improving your writing, building your substantive expertise, or refining another core skill. You won't regret the investment.

**When it comes to career planning and navigating inside a law firm, in your opinion, what's the most common mistake you see other attorneys making?**

The most common mistake I see associates making is the one I made early in my career: keeping your head down, quietly doing your work, and hoping that someone—somewhere—sees and appreciates everything you do. It's not realistic. Relationships matter. And to be fully recognized for what you do behind the keyboard, sometimes you need to step away from it and connect with your colleagues.

**What challenges, if any, did you face or had to overcome in your career path and what was the lesson learned? How did it affect or influence your career?**

My daughter was born in May 2020—not long after I joined Cooley and the world shut down. Establishing myself at a new firm while helping raise two young children mid-pandemic was certainly a challenge, albeit not a unique one. But Cooley's handling of the pandemic was exemplary, and I couldn't be prouder of it.

**Knowing what you know now about your career path, what advice would you give to your younger self?**

If you've read this far, you can probably guess my advice: invest in your relationships with colleagues. Building relationships is not merely necessary to advance; those relationships can be the most rewarding part of your career.

**Do you utilize technology to benefit the firm/practice and/or business development?**

Of course; I'm at Cooley! We represent the world's most innovative and disruptive companies, and our systems need to match their level of sophistication to enable us to work as efficiently and effectively as possible. We leverage cutting-edge technology every day to communicate, research, synthesize information, protect client data, present in the courtroom, and more.

**How would you describe your work mindset?**

Provide elite client service while being a good teammate. At the end of the day, high-stakes litigation is a team sport, and we deliver the best results for our clients when we collaborate and work as a single, cohesive team.