Proskauer

Law360 MVP of the Year: Christopher Robinson

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Christopher Robinson, a partner with Proskauer Rose LLP, specializes in handling complex secondary transactions, such as advising Blackstone Strategic Partners as a lead investor in the purchase of $5 billion in fund interests from Kaiser Permanente, and was recently named co-head of Proskauer's secondary transactions and liquidity solutions practice — earning him a spot as one of the 2024 Law360 Private Equity MVPs.

His biggest accomplishment:

Robinson said his biggest accomplishment over the past year was being named one of three co-heads of the firm's secondary transactions and liquidity solutions practice. He said it has been exciting to help strengthen and grow the headcount of the group, which currently includes 57 attorneys, according to Proskauer's website.

The practice focuses on finding liquidity solutions for clients, including through single- and multi-asset continuation funds, preferred equity deals and tender spinouts, according to the firm website.

Robinson, who is also in the firm's private funds group, is proud of the promotion because it represents the latest step up in his 15-year career practicing law.

"Ultimately, you want to look for opportunities to do great deals, have great results for your clients and to work with the most dynamic players in the space," he said. "You look for leadership opportunities."

Robinson said his success is a byproduct of the firm's success. He noted that one particularly positive result came as he led the team that advised Blackstone in navigating a $5 billion fund interests deal with Kaiser Permanente that was reached in September 2023 — which Proskauer described as the largest limited partner portfolio sale of the calendar year.

Another significant accomplishment was his work advising an affiliate of Apollo Global Management in connection with a $1.15 billion single-asset continuation fund that OceanSound Partners closed in April.

Apollo S3 was the lead investor, with Robinson advising Apollo. The transaction unfolded as part of Ocean Sound's sale of its portfolio company, SMX Group LLC.

His biggest challenge:

Recent market dynamics presented challenges for the industry overall, Robinson said. He noted there has been a crowded market, with many players trying to raise funds simultaneously.

"In terms of timelines, it's taking longer [for funds] to get to their final closing," Robinson said. "In addition, private equity has slowed down. People are weary of doing deals. But even though we are facing headwinds, if we can get the capital to investors, it's a win-win."

Why he's a private equity attorney:

Robinson said he has always been intrigued by private equity. He likes dealing with individuals who are helping to shape their companies and setting them up for their ultimate success.

"Honestly, I had the benefit of growing with the marketplace," he said. "I'm a deal junkie. I love the opportunity to work with clients and get access to high-profile performance companies."

Robinson also led Blackstone Strategic Partners in a deal that involved Alpine Investors selling its ownership of Apex Service Partners — an HVAC, plumbing and electrical services company — to a continuation vehicle valued at more than $3.4 billion.

His advice for junior attorneys:

Earlier in his career, Robinson said, he spent a year and a half in-house at Prudential in its alternative assets group, which focuses on asset management, on the investment committee. He saw the impact of different styles of advice and realized attorneys cannot take a one-size-fits-all approach with clients.

Rather, attorneys must learn the client's business and what they hope to accomplish before providing advice, Robinson said.

"Better attorneys are the ones that give you tailored advice," he said. "Those are the ones that stand out from the pack as dealmakers."

The conversation might differ based on the specific person an attorney is talking to, Robinson said. For instance, if providing information to someone in a client's legal department, an attorney can delve deep into the details of issues. However, someone on the commercial end of the business may not care about those specific legal details, and may instead want to know how a decision will impact the business.

"Ask yourself, 'Am I being helpful or not helpful? How is the advice being used?'" Robinson said.

His proudest moment:

Robinson said he is proudest of his work to help people from diverse backgrounds enter and thrive in the secondary markets space. In particular, he is proud of his work with Diversity in Secondaries Initiative, a nonprofit that seeks to help individuals advance their careers and navigate the industry. During the past year, Robinson served as a keynote panel speaker at the organization's annual conference.

"To me, it's incredibly important to create a social network for underrepresented professionals in the industry," he said. "I am extremely proud to have been part of this event that is helping to drive progress toward greater inclusion in the secondaries industry."

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- **Christopher C. Robinson**
  Partner