

ROBIN A. PAINTER

Partner, Proskauer, Boston
Boston College Law School



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When asked why she became a lawyer, Robin A. Painter says, quite frankly, that there was a recession going on when she was finishing college and she decided she might as well go to grad school and incur more debt rather than scrambling for an entry-level job.

"But I found out I loved law school and love being a lawyer even more," she says. "It turned out to be the right choice, I guess."

She also got the chance to become a trailblazer. As a young corporate associate at the now-defunct Testa, Hurwitz & Thibault in the '80s, she was assigned to work with some of the earliest VCs before they were even known as such. As the industry grew, she convinced the firm to form a practice group focusing on it. Over the years, she says, the work has gotten more rewarding as its grown in complexity.

"It's been a fun challenge as the asset class has matured," says Painter. "Every year there are regulatory changes that impact the industry and you really need to stay current."

Today Painter serves as global co-head of the private funds group at her current firm, Proskauer, where she also spent six years leading the firm's corporate department. Over the course of her career, she's mentored three generations of partners who started after her and are now practice leaders within the private investment field themselves.

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Outside her practice, Painter is committed to helping women advance in the VC, private equity and hedge fund fields. In fact, she co-founded the Women in Private Equity Summit, an annual conference for senior-level women in the field, more than a decade ago when she realized the industry lacked a forum for women to connect. More than 550 women attended this year's conference.

"Every couple of months I'll get an email saying, 'Hey, this person I met at the conference invested in my fund' or 'We did a deal together,'" says Painter. "It's really made an impact."

— **Eric T. Berkman**