Shannon Coleman Egle, partner at Knoxville, Tennessee-based law firm Kramer Rayson LLP, primarily focuses her practice on the areas of mergers and acquisitions and healthcare. Interestingly, Shannon's background in real estate led to her career in healthcare law. We sat down with Shannon to discuss how the two sectors intertwine, how she got to where she is now and her views on the state of the legal industry as a whole.

How long have you been practicing law? Where did you go to school and how did you start your career in law?
I have been practicing law for almost 20 years. I attended the University of Tennessee College of Law and began my career at a small firm in Knoxville.

What is a typical day like for you? What is the best part of your job?
A typical day is spent on the phone with clients and other lawyers, emailing, drafting documents and analyzing factual scenarios to determine how best to structure a transaction in a way that is compliant with applicable laws and regulations. The best part of my job is figuring out ways for complex healthcare arrangements to move forward so real people in my community (and sometimes beyond) have access to quality healthcare.

What initially attracted you to healthcare regulation law? What makes you stay?
The practice of healthcare regulation is a by-product of my representation of real estate developers during the real estate boom of the early 2000s. Many of my clients at the time were physicians who were dabbling in real estate development. For example, I would get an occasional healthcare question mixed in with discussions of the best place for a detention basin to go on a piece of undeveloped property. I decided that I should be able to answer some of those questions—even if on a very basic level—and, thus, my career in healthcare regulation began. I stay in the field because I find the business of healthcare fascinating, and I love to help put together ventures to ensure my community has access to top-notch healthcare.

How does your healthcare specialty integrate with your real estate background?
As mentioned, having a background in real estate development work is really how my healthcare specialty came to be. Interestingly, a very high percentage of the healthcare transactions I work on have at least some real estate component to them. So although I primarily consider myself a “healthcare” attorney now, I still work on a considerable number of real estate transactions—either standalone transactions or in connection with a healthcare transaction.

Does Kramer Rayson approach healthcare regulation differently than other firms?
Almost all transactions have aspects to them that are outside the primary expertise of the lawyer coordinating the legal side of the transaction. The great part about practicing healthcare law at Kramer Rayson is that our healthcare team is backed by the resources of a full-service law firm. It is of great value to my clients that I am able to tap into those resources as issues arise.
From a business of law perspective, what are some of the biggest changes you've seen at your law firm over the last two years?

As technology is becoming more advanced, our need for physical storage space is declining, and our need for digital storage space is ever increasing. Although this has been the case for about a decade, in the past two years or so, I have started to see some of our older attorneys starting to embrace this trend. This has allowed our firm to reconsider not only how much physical space we need, but also how we use the physical space we have and how we manage our electronic storage.

What about industry-wide changes in small and midsize law? What challenges are presenting themselves and how are you dealing with them?

This may not necessarily be unique to small and midsize firms, but we are certainly seeing an increase in the number of clients who come to us for advice about issues that have arisen from the organization of an entity or drafting of a contract without the advice of counsel. We recognize, of course, that it is convenient for a client to pay a fee to a company found on the internet and have documents magically appear in their inbox. We have to adjust to serving in the role of addressing issues on the back end instead of being in the role of preventing them on the front end.

Also, not unique to small and midsize firms, our firm has lawyers whose age range spans more than 50 years. Our younger lawyers’ ideas of practicing law and work-life balance are certainly different than our older lawyers’ ideas of the same. I am in the “middle” generation, so it is interesting to see the give and take between the younger generation and the older generation and to know what I have to look forward to as I continue to progress through my career. I am very proud of how our firm has handled these issues.

What practice areas are growing the most within your firm? What do you attribute that to?

I am happy to say that 2018 showed considerable growth across all practice areas for our firm. I believe the reason for this is that Americans are finally starting to feel more confident in the global economy. With the impending uncertainty surrounding Brexit, the trade war and growing tension among some global political leaders, I can only hope the trend continues. I am cautiously optimistic as 2019 unfolds.

On a personal note, how do you like to spend your time when you are not at work?

I am married with two young children, so my time spent away from the office primarily revolves around my family. I am also active with our church leadership, and enjoy serving on the board of the Tennessee Justice Center, a non-profit law firm based in Nashville, Tennessee that focuses on access to affordable, quality healthcare for all Tennesseans.

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