



**Education:** Juris Doctor, University of South Carolina School of Law; Bachelor of Arts, political science and psychology, Clemson University

**Company Name:** Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP

**Industry:** Law

**Company CEO:** James K. “Jim” Lehman

**Company Headquarters Location:** Columbia, South Carolina

**Number of Employees:** 357 (in Columbia office)

**Words you live by:** “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” –Albert Einstein

**Personal Philosophy:** Live curiously and never stop learning.

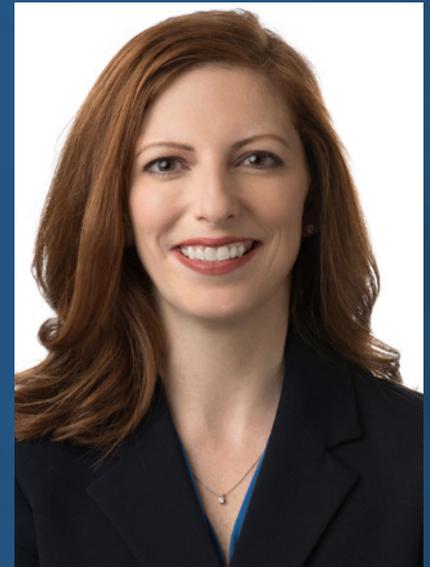
**What book are you reading:** For fun, *A Breath of Snow and Ashes* by Diana Gabaldon (Book 6 of the *Outlander* series); for my own education, *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi

**What was your first job:** The first job I secured on my own was tutoring Clemson University athletes in calculus.

**Favorite charity:** St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital

**Interests:** Traveling (pre-COVID), hiking, working out, and good food and wine

**Family:** Husband, John; sons, Jack (10) and Sam (8), and our dog Callie (12)



## How COVID-19 Revealed My Leadership Style

I have taken my share of professional personality tests over the years—Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, DISC Behavior Inventory, etc. While I find them interesting and sometimes useful tools, I have always been a little sheepish about sharing my results. More than a small part of me has felt as if being an “intuitive introvert” meant that I could not be—or could not be viewed as—an effective leader, especially in a profession and a workplace that is dominated by strong male voices.

As I have learned through leading my office of 350+ through the COVID-19 crisis, however, both of those fears were misplaced. My personal set of leadership traits, including those I viewed as weaknesses—my nurturing personality, along with my desire to build consensus and inclusion, and seek advice from

others—has been valuable and valued during this difficult time.

It is well documented that countries with female leaders—namely New Zealand, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Taiwan, and Finland—have responded exceptionally well to the COVID-19 crisis. While some news sources have tried to downplay the commonality of female leadership among these countries, others have posited that traditional feminine leadership skills are a difference-maker in times of crisis. These female leaders’ responses to COVID-19 were guided by compassion, empathy, and humility, as well as a willingness to collaborate with and listen to scientific experts.

Without consciously doing so at the time, these are the same traits that I employed in making decisions

relating to closing our office, staggering our staff, and taking other measures to protect my colleagues and our business during the crisis. Through the uncertainty and anxiety of the crisis, I was able to communicate to our office in a way that was informative and instructive, as well as reassuring and calming.

Looking back at the last four months, I am surprised at how natural it felt to lead in this manner. As Henry Kissinger once said, “A diamond is a chunk of coal that did well under pressure.” While the pressure and the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis have not changed my leadership style, they have revealed it and have given me the confidence to lead unapologetically in my own way, knowing that compassion and empathy make me strong, not weak.