

# WASHINGTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

## In the Spotlight: Elham Dehbozorgi

MEET THE CHIEF ETHICS AND RISK COUNSEL, STERNE, KESSLER, GOLDSTEIN & FOX.

Meet Elham Dehbozorgi, chief ethics and risk counsel, Sterne, Kessler, Goldstein & Fox. Before Sterne Kessler, Dehbozorgi was a compliance and ethics attorney at Latham & Watkins and a conflicts attorney at WilmerHale.

**If you could trade places with one person for a day, who would it be?** NASA astronaut Scott Kelly. His photos from the space station are mind-blowing. To be in his place for even a day and see the world from that perspective would be life-changing.

**What's your best habit as a leader?** Developing strong relationships with people across all levels of the firm. I'm able to mediate issues more effectively when my colleagues trust and respect me.

**What's your worst habit as a leader?** I tend to overschedule myself, which can lead to long days.

**Most common mistake lawyers make:** Putting in writing what they will regret later. And not putting in writing what they will subsequently wish they had memorialized.

**Worst legal ethics breach you've seen:** A lawyer misappropriating funds from a client's trust account. That is one of the most serious breaches of trust and professionalism in our industry.

**One thing you can't argue your way out of:** When my daughters ask me for one more bedtime story

**Most interesting case:** Studying the issues relating to outsourcing legal work to lawyers in countries like India and navigating the regulatory and sometimes political hurdles that come with that. It's challenging and fascinating.

**Biggest change in your industry:** Like their corporate clients, law firms have developed in-house legal teams in recent years to protect their



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interests and to provide assurance to clients in the way their matters are handled. In addition, clients are holding firms to a higher level of accountability than what is required by applicable ethics rules. That's where I come in – positions like mine have become essential to growing law firms.

**Where is your favorite vacation spot?** The Caribbean because it is the place where my family and I truly relax and unplug. We try to discover a new island every year.

**Which businessperson would you most like to dine with?** Indra Nooyi, PepsiCo CEO. She has said that her rebellious spirit helps give her daily inspiration. How does she keep that spirit fired up?

**What word or phrase do you most overuse?** No

**What's one thing you're glad your employer didn't know about you before you were hired?** My love for lattes. Sterne Kessler has a barista bar, and I am keeping the barista pretty busy!

**What's one thing you can't live a day without?** Google

**Best lesson from a mentor:** Don't be afraid to be assertive. It doesn't have to be with an edge, but say what you mean without hesitation.

**Which D.C.-area business leader do you most admire?** Patty Stonesifer, president of D.C. nonprofit Martha's Table and former head of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, for her philanthropic focus.

**What is one thing about which you are consistently dishonest with yourself?** That I am a great cook! I am actually just OK.