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Meet the Next Generation of Dealmakers | Mikail Clark

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MEET THE DEALMAKERS

The Next Generation

Mikail Clark

Mikail Clark is a Senior Associate in Kilpatrick's Corporate Mergers & Acquisitions and Securities (MASC) team. Based out Charlotte, his practice focuses on mid-market mergers and acquisitions. He represents private equity firms with platform and add-on acquisitions and financing in a wide variety of industries, including manufacturing, financial services, technology, retail and consumer goods. He also represents strategic buyers and sellers in all aspects of the deal life cycle. Additionally, Mikail represents emerging companies, founders, venture capital firms, and investors in early-stage financings.

Mikail was recognized in 2026 and the five years immediately preceding as one of the "Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch" for Corporate Law by *The Best Lawyers in America*®. He was also named one of *Business North Carolina* magazine's "Young Guns (Best Under 40)" in 2024.

What is the focus of your practice?

My practice has three buckets. The predominant bucket is buy-side, mid-market, M&A work. I represent both strategic and financial buyers. Strategic buyers are often larger companies acquiring smaller companies with the goal of achieving economies of scale or growing the scope of their business. Financial buyers are mostly private equity clients who are either acquiring an initial company in a transaction we call a platform acquisition, or another entity in the same industry as their platform, which is an add-on acquisition.

The second part of my practice is outside general counsel work. Here, I often draft and review commercial agreements like supply or services agreements. I also handle many different ownership-related documents, such as operating, partnership, and shareholder agreements.

The last part of my practice is working on investment deals with high-net-worth investors, either individuals or entities, or with founders seeking to raise capital. Usually, the deals are early-stage capital raises, including Series A and Series B rounds.

What do you most enjoy about your work?

I like that there is something to learn with every deal, because each deal inevitably presents some new issue that requires finding creative resolutions. I find that in deal work there is a great cadence of the usual and the unusual to always keep you on your toes. I also enjoy the due diligence process because it allows me to gain a deep understanding about the business at the center of the deal.

In addition to the intellectual challenge that this work presents, I also like that it requires me to focus on the business outcomes my clients are trying to achieve. So, while I'm drafting the legal documents, I must also take on a business advisory role for my clients to ensure that we're addressing concerns like whether the business will have

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sufficient working capital or what transition services the seller must provide to the buyer and how the seller will be compensated for these services. It is always rewarding to walk a client through these issues and then work together to identify a reasonable solution that both protects our client's interests and moves the deal forward.

Did you always know that you wanted to do M&A work?

I knew I wanted to do M&A work before going to law school. Deciding to go to law school, however, wasn't something I was thinking about as I started college. I initially was planning to go into accounting or perhaps investment banking, so my undergraduate degrees were in international business and business marketing, and then I pursued an MBA. During my MBA, I took a business law class which completely changed my trajectory. I always knew that I was going to do something business-related, so once I did decide to go into law, I knew I wanted to do corporate work, and in particular deal work.

What made you join Kilpatrick?

There were a couple of reasons for choosing Kilpatrick. First, it was the opportunity to do highly sophisticated work and to be exposed to a wide variety of deal structures and industries. Second, it was the opportunity to work closely with Will Joyner, a Winston-Salem-based partner in our group who's an exceptional attorney and an amazing mentor. I would say that the decision to work with Will has been transformative for my career. I've learned so much from him and continue to learn with every new project we work on together. He is also very supportive of my efforts to develop my practice.

Does Kilpatrick provide a good platform to develop your practice?

Definitely. While practice development is ultimately up to the individual, the Firm and the MASC team are very supportive of these efforts. We are provided with significant resources and mentoring. It also helps that Kilpatrick enjoys such a stellar reputation in the business community. The combination of Kilpatrick's resources and my personal efforts have already yielded several clients, and I look forward to growing my practice further.

What advice would you give to a more junior associate who is looking to build their own practice?

First, I have to emphasize that that's not the path for everyone. Some people would much rather devote their time to the work itself and not develop business, and that's OK – we need both rainmakers and those who will expertly do the work that is being brought into the Firm. But if you are looking to build a book of business, I think that it's never too early to start thinking about creating and leveraging opportunities to build relationships. For the most part, you'll need to make these opportunities yourself by targeting and attempting to make meaningful connections with decision-makers at prospective clients. Ultimately, if you want to grow your practice, it's up to you: you can't and shouldn't rely on anyone else to do so.

Even though your first and foremost task as a junior associate is to develop your core competencies and become a good attorney, you can still devote some time to practice development. For me, this path included getting connected with local chambers of commerce and incubators, and also reaching out to build relationships with other professionals who serve the same type of clients as I do – accountants, investment bankers, and so on.

I think it's also important to note that this process takes time and it can't be rushed. It's a sales proposition where our technical services are broadly homogenous. So, we must differentiate ourselves through our attentiveness, thoughtfulness, and creativity – the hallmarks of a great service provider. We also differentiate ourselves by being relatable and easy to talk to – the kind of person a client would feel comfortable trusting.

You had mentioned that getting involved with a local chamber of commerce is a great way to build relationships. Is it also an important avenue to contributing to your community?

I believe it is. When I moved to the Charlotte area, I made it a priority to find a local chamber because in my previous experience, it is the fastest way to become involved in one's community. So, from the start of my involvement with the Union County Chamber, I made sure to be actively engaged by attending events and volunteering. In 2020, I went through the Chamber's leadership class, then joined the Chamber's board. Being on the board has allowed me to learn about the business needs of the members and also to help implement many changes to serve our members better. While I've been serving on the board, we've changed the dues structure, launched a public policy arm, and revamped policies, articles, and bylaws.

One of the biggest initiatives that I'm involved with in the Chamber is the public policy committee, which is tasked with publishing and updating an annual legislative agenda, so that our members are aware of federal, state, and local legislation that is likely to impact them. We primarily focus on three areas: workforce development, infrastructure, and tax and regulatory landscape. We also help with advocacy on the most pressing issues for our members. My involvement with the Chamber has been a lot of work, but it's very rewarding to see the positive role that the Chamber is playing in the local business community.

Do you have any advice for junior associates who are struggling with the stress of practicing law?

My best advice is to be intentional about making the time for the things that keep you healthy, grounded, and connected with the important people in your life. For me, incorporating physical activity into my schedule is very important to counterbalance the sedentary nature of our work, and also to model a healthy and active lifestyle for my kids. I stay fit mainly by boxing and swimming with my two boys. Boxing is such an exhilarating and demanding sport that it's almost like a meditation – you can't think about anything else while you're sparring if you don't want to get popped! I also read (mostly non-fiction) to explore new ideas and broaden my knowledge.

I also teach Sunday school at my church. We have a class of about thirty kindergarteners and first-graders. It's a very enjoyable way for me to give back and help kids with their spiritual and mental development. It's fascinating to watch kids grow and develop and to see them soak up information and discover their interests.

All these activities help take care of my physical and mental health, so that I have a solid foundation to handle the demands of my practice. I plan to be in this game for a long time, and I think that health is a nonnegotiable prerequisite for a long career.

To learn more about Mikail and the Firm's nationally recognized M&A Team, please visit *ktslaw.com*

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Related People

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