

NEWS & INSIGHTS

ALM QUOTES MELODY EAGAN IN ARTICLE ON 2025 MANAGING PARTNER PRIORITIES

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Law.com sought insights from Lightfoot managing partner **Melody H. Eagan** on the results revealed by The American Lawyer's **2025 managing partner survey**.

In the Pro Mid-Market article, "Law Firms Report Wide Growth, Successful Billing Rate Increases and Less Merger Interest," Melody discussed associate-level hiring and utilizing technology, both key points of discussion among law firm leaders right now.

The ALM survey found that first-year associate hiring increased in 2024, with 55 firms saying they hired more first-years than they did in 2023. Just over 35 firms said they hired about the same number of first years in 2024 as they did in 2023, while 26 firms hired no first-year associates at all. Lightfoot is among the firms that hired several **first-year associates in 2024**.

"We need more associates because work for us has been growing," Eagan told ALM. "Our primary growth model has been through hiring associates and then bringing them up through the ranks and with the hope that they will be a partner in the law firm one day. That's always been our philosophy, as opposed to focusing on hiring lateral partners."

The survey also revealed that firm leaders are investing in both their technology and marketing budgets, with 50 significantly increasing their technology spending and 21 boosting funds for marketing. Eagan noted that Lightfoot has prioritized strategic investments in legal technology that supports client work and operations.

"For example, last year, we formed an innovation committee, which is a committee of lawyers of all ages, as well as some of our staff members that were trying out new AI products to see whether or not we feel like those are things that may help us," Eagan told ALM.

This is not the first time Eagan has discussed talent development and growth with ALM. In early 2024, she was **featured in a webinar**, where she spoke on the importance of continual organic succession planning.

Eagan became Lightfoot's first female managing partner in 2018. She has decades of experience defending high-stakes product liability and catastrophic injury lawsuits and has successfully tried numerous cases to verdict in the Southeast. Eagan also represents medical providers facing malpractice claims and serves as appellate counsel for multiple clients. Benchmark Litigation has named Eagan one of the country's "Top 250 Women in Litigation" for the past two years. She is also listed in The Best Lawyers in America® and Mid-South Super Lawyers, and the National Law Journal has recognized her as an Elite Boutique Trailblazer.