

## ▶▶ DISTINGUISHED LEADERS

### CARMITA ALONSO

PARTNER AT FRAGOMEN, DEL REY, BERNSEN & LOEWY

**What are some of your proudest, recent achievements?**

**F**or those of us in the immigration and mobility space, we are operating in unprecedented times with respect to COVID-19 and the impact it has had—and continues to have—on all of our clients. Each time we can provide successful results to one of our clients during the pandemic, I am extraordinarily proud of what we accomplished. Most recently, while much of the world closed down as a result of the pandemic, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services remained opened. The practical outcome of this was the need to process cases during the height of our busiest time, H-1B cap season, and dealing with new government processes that do not allow for electronic filings or signatures. Incredibly, notwithstanding the fact that our full staff is working from home, challenges associated with printing and reviewing remotely, “wet” signature requirements on forms and the check-writing for government fees, we filed all client cases within the first 30 days—as opposed to the 90 days that are allowed. This effort placed both foreign nationals and companies at ease, with the knowledge and security that we lodged the petitions with the agency on time to await adjudication.

**Name a lawyer or mentor whose leadership inspired you.**

There is no question that the mentor who has inspired me the most is our chairman, Austin T. Fragomen, Jr., as he is so incredibly dedicated to our work and driven to be the best attorney in this space. He inspires me to take on challenges of every kind, whether a new client, a complex legal issue or managing people or business functions. Importantly, he has taught me to listen carefully to better understand our clients’ needs. His leadership style is different from my own, but he embraces my unique qualities that enable me to be successful in our work.

**How are the business and profession of law changing, and how should lawyers adapt for the future?** I tell our attorneys that our clients’ businesses are going to change more in the next 10 years than they did in the last 50. We



need to change, and we need to be open to new ideas and collaborate both internally and with our clients. I have found that the best, most innovative ideas at our firm come from our case workers—the lawyers and paralegals managing data and case processes and leveraging our tools to drive efficiency. Currently, immigration is distinctly positioned to take advantage of tools and technologies to make our process better, faster, smarter and more cost-effective. Lawyers must adapt to the shift being driven by clients with respect to downward fee pressure and embrace innovation as other professions and industries have done. Our firm recognized this trend and has been at the forefront of developing and implementing tools and technology for data management and case-processing and will continue our significant investment in this critical area.

**What is the best advice for someone already in the profession who is seeking to make a greater impact?**

The most successful and impactful lawyers are those who set goals and continually work at them. By constantly asking ourselves how we can better help our clients and re-assessing our goals, we all gain. However, lawyers have an obligation beyond their firms and clients, and that is to their communities. We should look at how we define success and ensure it includes helping those in greatest need and giving back to our communities. There is no better feeling than applying the considerable skills we have to help the underserved. To make the greatest impact, we need to develop not only as lawyers, but as people.