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After Battling Cancer, Boies Schiller Rainmaker Stuart Singer Tackles Something New: Day-to-Day Firm Management

By Ross Todd

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At a time when a lot of people might take a step back from professional responsibilities, **Boies Schiller Flexner** partner **Stuart Singer** took a step forward.

In 2022, after 65 years of good health, Singer took time away from his prodigious litigation practice to seek treatment for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. He relocated from his home in South Florida to Boston to go through six cycles of chemotherapy over 18 weeks at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

"When you have something like that happen to you, you take stock and you think about what you want to do," said Singer earlier this summer. "Do you want to do something completely different? Or do you want to continue with what you're doing?"

Singer has plenty of interests outside his professional life that could have nudged him toward retirement: golf, wine, debate. But those familiar with his passion for the law and his connection with clients were hardly



Stuart H. Singer of Boies Schiller Flexner.

surprised when he went back to practicing full-tilt shortly after doctors gave word his cancer was in remission. He's continued to work for memorabilia company Panini in disputes shaping the sports trading card industry and Florida Power & Light Co. in dealing with the legal fallout from power outages caused by Hurricane Irma in 2017.

It's perhaps a bit more surprising that on top of resuming his role as one of the firm's top rainmakers, Singer has since embraced a new

role as one of Boies Schiller's day-to-day managers. Earlier this year, Singer became one of the firm's three managing partners alongside fellow South Florida partner **Sigrid McCawley** and the firm's chair-elect, **Matthew Schwartz**. During this time of transition for the firm, with founder **David Boies** serving his final year as chairman, Singer, the longest-tenured of the three MPs, is helping to oversee the firm's focus on business development opportunities and redouble efforts to strengthen operations in California, where Boies Schiller experienced significant losses over the past few years. He's also overseeing more mundane matters such as new matter approval and making sure bills go out on time.

Singer, now 68, sat down during one of his trips to the firm's San Francisco office earlier this summer to discuss why he would take on such duties in the wake of a significant health scare.

He was matter-of-fact.

Boies and fellow founding partner **Jonathan Schiller** approached him about taking on the role last year. "I thought about it and said I'd be interested in doing that if they thought it would be helpful to the firm," Singer said.

In a phone interview, Boies said Singer's willingness to step up for the firm in such circumstances "illustrates the kind of person he is ... unflappable and undeterred by almost anything"

"I think he really, genuinely, as I do, enjoys what we do," he said. "I think that no one who was his age would be doing this at this level, even without a health scare, if they didn't really love what they did."

Let's pause for a second to note that Boies is now 83 and still taking on new matters. The Wall Street Journal [reported last month](#) that he represented Delta Airlines as it considered litigation against Microsoft and cybersecurity company CrowdStrike over the tech outages that ravaged air travel this summer.

"As David Boies likes to say, he's gonna practice indefinitely, but not infinitely," Singer told me. "But I think he's leaning more to the infinite."

The Recruit

Former Boies Schiller partner **Bill Isaacson** had a significant hand in bringing Singer to the firm nearly a quarter century ago.

Isaacson, now a partner at **Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison**, calls Singer "the only person in my professional life who was my friend before we were in a law firm together."

The two go way back. Isaacson was on the debate team at the University of Redlands when Singer, a former national champion debater at Northwestern University himself, then a top student at Harvard Law School, signed on to help coach the Redlands team. (David Boies, it should be noted, also debated at Redlands.) When Singer later clerked for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Byron White, Isaacson says Singer invited him to play basketball at "the highest court in the land"—the high court's vaunted hoop.

After his Supreme Court clerkship, Singer took the then-unusual step of moving back to his native South Florida to practice, first at **Greenberg Traurig**. Singer said he made the move because he saw Florida as full of business opportunity and a place where he could try cases.

“Very soon after I joined, I tried my first jury trial and won a whopping \$13,000 verdict for an explosion on a golf course irrigation system,” Singer said. “Some of the people at law school who said, ‘I can’t believe you’re going to Florida’ would call me up several years later to ask ‘Are there job opportunities down there?’ because they were tired of reviewing documents in a conference room for two years.”

Singer eventually built a sizable litigation practice and landed at the firm then known as **Kirkpatrick & Lockhart**, where he became a member of the management committee. Around the turn of the century, though, with Boies Schiller on the rise, Singer reached out to Isaacson to inquire about a possible move.

“At that point, I thought Boies Schiller was now on the map because Stuart was interested,” Isaacson said.

Isaacson said he took the idea of bringing on Singer to firm co-founder Schiller, who initially balked at the idea. Before giving up, Isaacson says he told Schiller: “I just thought I’d mentioned he’s really smart.”

“And then Jonathan said, ‘You know, all the years we’ve been working together, you’d never described anyone as really smart.’ He said, ‘Let’s get him in here!’”

After meeting with the D.C. team and flying to New York to meet with Boies, Singer joined the firm in 2000.

“I’ve always said that whatever contributions I’ve made to Boies Schiller, the most important one was my knowing Stuart Singer,” said Isaacson. “There’s this phrase these days of

firms trying to differentiate by acquiring talent. Stuart was talent.”

In the years since joining Boies Schiller, Singer expanded his trial and appellate practice and increased its national reach for clients including Fidelity National Financial, Carnival Corp., Ryder Corp., NextEra Energy and Greenberg Traurig. He’s helped build out Boies Schiller’s South Florida presence, served as the administrative partner of its Fort Lauderdale office and sat on the firmwide executive committee.

But his first turn as a part of the firm’s day-to-day management team comes in the wake of significant talent losses in recent years, including the departure of Isaacson and partner **Karen Dunn** to Paul, Weiss. According to data from the National Law Journal, the firm shrank from more than 320 lawyers at its peak headcount to about 150 before the latest transition plans were announced last year. Among those who left were two partners originally tapped as Boies’ leadership heirs: **Nicholas Gravante Jr.**, based in New York, who left to join **Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft**, and **Natasha Harrison**, based in London, who left to form her own firm.

In the wake of all the losses, both Singer and Boies pointed to the firm’s stability in Ft. Lauderdale, an office with about 25 lawyers.

“I think it was important that I had a primary role in growing a successful office that’s been very stable, very profitable,” Singer said. “I think that showed that I had the leadership skills that would be useful in a broader setting.”

Ursula Ungaro, a former federal judge in the Southern District of Florida whom Singer

helped recruit to the firm in 2021, said she was surprised to see Singer take on the managing partner role in the wake of his health scare. “But I’m beginning to think that Stuart has the capacity for almost anything,” Ungaro said. Even from her role on the bench, Ungaro said she was impressed by Singer’s ability to express himself and get along with opposing counsel. But in working alongside him in litigation for Panini, she said she’s seen Singer’s value as a leader first-hand. “One of the things I really admire about Stuart is that he has a remarkable ability for assembling teams and getting absolutely the best out of people that they have to offer,” she said. “I think he brings to the table enormous judgment, enormous experience and this really just extraordinary talent to bring people together.”

Boies credits Singer with developing a “family” atmosphere in Ft. Lauderdale, where he says there’s a “tremendous” and “well-deserved” loyalty to Singer from younger lawyers whom he’s helped mentor.

“I think one of the things that we let get away from us a little bit was collegiality and the closeness that we had within offices for a long time,” said Boies of the cultural changes that

came with growth. Boies said that rapid expansion and the volume of work the firm was dealing with could have contributed to less cultural cohesion. “Everybody was focusing on getting the immediate job done and spending less of the time on the long-run development and mentoring of the kind that you have got to do.”

“No one is more dedicated to the firm institutionally and more dedicated to and responsive to the younger people” than Singer, Boies said.

Singer admits that the firm made missteps before landing on its current succession plan, with Schwartz set to take the reins as chair from Boies at the turn of the year. But he said by focusing on “three legs of the stool” the firm is built on—contingency work, hourly work primarily for defense-side clients and a significant focus on public interest cases—the firm can put itself on solid footing heading into the future.

He said he sees a generation of up-and-comers at the firm, and he’s hoping to focus them on business development opportunities.

“I particularly enjoy working with our younger lawyers at this point in my career, and I viewed the opportunity to become involved in management in a more active way as a way of doing that on a larger scale,” Singer said.