

Deborah O'Donnell

Chief Administrative Officer



Connect with Deborah

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Bio

Deb O'Donnell creates momentum for evolution and does not hesitate to initiate, execute, and manage change when progress calls for it. Above all, she approaches her role with the conviction that strong operations support strong people, and strong people drive strong organizations. In her role as Chief Administrative Officer of Gould & Ratner, she brings a cross-disciplinary perspective and a collaborative leadership style to the firm's operations.

What distinguishes Deb in this role is not simply operational capability, but her fluency across multiple business disciplines and her unwavering belief that meaningful success is never achieved alone. Throughout her career, collaboration has been the cornerstone of her professional work. She is energized by the opportunity to partner with others and firmly believes that the best ideas, and the most sustainable progress, emerge when diverse perspectives come together. For Deb, collaboration is not a management technique; it is the engine of innovation.

As Chief Administrative Officer, Deb oversees the firm's operations, office services, facilities, workflows, process improvement initiatives, and vendor relationships, with a focus on smooth, efficient day-to-day management. Her responsibilities include initiating, executing, and enforcing office procedures and protocol, as well as supervising the maintenance and improvement of office facilities and reviewing various operational agreements and contracts.

Deb embraces being a "jack of all trades." Her exposure to multiple disciplines allows her to understand the challenges and priorities of colleagues across the organization, positioning her to offer informed guidance, anticipate needs, and contribute ideas that may not surface within a single silo. This multidimensional fluency enhances both her effectiveness and her impact.

At the core of Deb's leadership philosophy is a commitment to servant leadership. She leads by being human first, taking the time to understand how individuals operate, what motivates them, and how to create environments where they can thrive. She believes that operational excellence and people-centered leadership are not mutually exclusive; rather, they are interdependent. By fostering trust, encouraging collaboration, and empowering others to contribute meaningfully, she helps cultivate a culture that values efficiency, innovation, and shared ownership of success.

Credentials

Education

Generations College

Keller Graduate School of Management of DeVry University

Purdue University Northwest

Affiliations

- Greater Chicago Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators
 - Secretary (2017-2019)
 - Communication/Website Director (2015-2017)
 - Immediate Past President/Historian (2014-2015)
 - President (2013-2014)
 - Vice President/President Elect (2012-2013)
 - Secretary and Vice President Elect (2011-2012)
 - Communication/Website Director (2008-2011)
- Association of Legal Administrators
 - Member since 1996
 - Member, ALA Membership Development Committee (2016-2017)
 - Annual Nominating Committee (October 2014)
 - Region 3 Nominating Committee (October 2012)
- Professional Women's Club of Chicago
 - Member, Membership Committee (2017-2019)

News

Deborah O'Donnell Joins Gould & Ratner as Incoming Chief Administrative Officer, May 11, 2026