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## Brian Willis

Corporate Counsel  
Amazon

*"The great thing about being a lawyer is that it is collaborative work and it naturally pushes you to get better."*

**Q: When were you at Shumaker and what was your position/practice area?**

**A:** I was primarily a litigator with a strong focus on real estate and leasing issues. I worked closely with Jaime Austrich supporting his commercial landlord clients, which has ended up serving as the groundwork for my current role. I joined Shumaker in 2012 and left in 2019.

**Q: What is your current position and company?**

**A:** I am Corporate Counsel at Amazon where I support what Amazon calls its Physical Stores business – that includes multiple concepts like Books, 4-Star, Go, and the recently launched Amazon Fresh (Fresh) grocery stores. My main work since starting has been to get Fresh off the ground and we recently opened our ninth store.

Part of my job is to handle traditional legal work of a real estate lawyer, but Amazon's legal culture is really about helping our internal clients grow fast with fewer legal touches. In other words, we don't just want to negotiate a lease. We want to build better systems that let us negotiate leases more efficiently. The most important work I can do here is putting in place mechanisms that allow my internal clients to decrease the amount of hands-on legal support they need.



**Q: What is your favorite memory of your time working at Shumaker?**

**A:** It's hard to pick just one, but I think one of the great traditions the firm has is the Thanksgiving lunch. Even as the firm grew, everyone in the office would still come together to share a meal.

**Q: What is the best advice you can give a new attorney?**

**A:** The job of a lawyer is to solve problems for our clients. This goes beyond just solving the big problem your client came to you with. For almost every communication you have with a client you will either be giving them work to do or taking work off their plate. As much as possible, you want to be doing the latter. Second, your colleagues are your clients just as much as your actual clients. That's true in a couple ways. It means you need to be solving your colleagues' problems and it means your colleagues are a source of work. Particularly for a young attorney at a firm of Shumaker's size, some of the most valuable networking you can do is building internal relationships.

**Q: What news would you like to share about your personal or professional life?**

**A:** We had our second daughter, Esme, in October 2019. It's hard to believe, but our oldest, Hazel, will be turning 4 this year.