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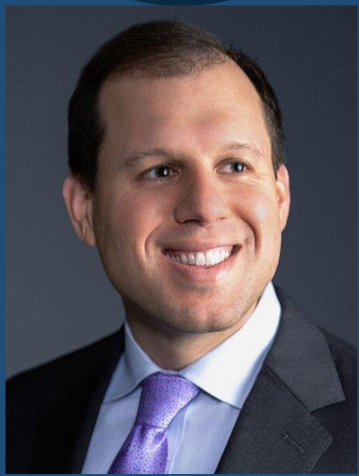
Rising Star: Mayer Brown's Glenn Kunkes

By **Hailey Konnath**

Law360 (August 21, 2026, 4:00 PM EDT) -- Mayer Brown LLP's Glenn Kunkes represented Barclays, Morgan Stanley and Citi in establishing Affirm's first-ever master trust and served as lead counsel to Bank of America in a $10 billion financing for KKR and Carlyle, earning him a spot among the banking practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.



Glenn Kunkes
Mayer Brown

Age: 39
Home base: Charlotte, N.C.
Position: Partner
Law school: University of Virginia School of Law
First job after law school: Associate at Alston & Bird LLP

The biggest deal of his career:

In 2024, Kunkes had a leading role in helping Affirm Inc. establish the master trust for its buy-now, pay-later loan platform. Affirm had previously relied on a long list of separate warehouse facilities with various financial institutions, but the master fund allowed the company to consolidate its reporting and roll out uniform standards across its deals.

Kunkes called the work "rewarding and challenging," noting that he's long worked with banks across from Affirm and handled nearly all of Affirm's securitizations.

"I'm intimately familiar with their product and their team," he said.

According to Kunkes, a master trust is designed to be a one-stop shop for all of a firm's financings and securitizations. The process took the better part of a year and involved a lot of research, he said. There are many different ways similar companies have set up master trusts, so Kunkes and his team "basically offered a menu to the banks and to Affirm and one by one just came up with a design that worked for what they needed and what the banks were able to accomplish," he said.

Since then, there've been about six securitizations off that line, and Affirm terminated all its old warehouses, he said.

Other notable matters he's handled:

Kunkes was lead counsel for Bank of America in its $10.13 billion back-leverage syndicated facility financing of KKR and Carlyle's acquisition of Discover Bank's student loan portfolio. The transaction was a critical component of Discover Bank's merger with Capital One.

He's also represented a handful of lenders in revolving warehouse facilities sponsored by Cherry Technologies Inc. Those involve buy-now, pay-later receivables and retail installment contracts related to elective medical procedures, and the aggregate commitment exceeds $1.25 billion, according to Mayer Brown. It's a highly regulated space, and Kunkes helped his clients navigate regulatory requirements and establish appropriate eligibility criteria. He also worked with underwriters.

On top of that, Kunkes was lead counsel to Macquarie Asset Managed Credit Advisers US LLC as it built and launched its collateralized loan obligation asset management program.

"More and more, we're seeing banks look for creative solutions," Kunkes said. As a result, he said, he's been working a lot with his fund finance colleagues over the last year and a half, and he expects that to continue.

"It's something I'm excited for going forward," he said.

His proudest moment as an attorney:

In the banking realm, "every day, month, year has its own adventures," Kunkes said. "But I always find it most flattering when clients recommend me to do deals, either that are across from them or for additional work."

For instance, Kunkes has worked with Goldman Sachs for years, including on a consumer loan program with mortgage company Rocket. This year, Goldman Sachs recommended Kunkes to Rocket, which has its own personal loan program, he said.

"Things like that are just very flattering for me personally," he said. "Not that I'm not happy to market and go out and look for work, but to get a strong endorsement from an established institution that you've been working with when they have lots of other choices is something that I'm proud of."

Kunkes said he's also gotten recommendations from companies he's been across the table from.

"That's something I've always enjoyed about transactional work," he said. "You don't leave the table pounding your fist, saying, 'I hope I never see them again.' You're like, 'Awesome! I look forward to the next one.'"

What motivates him:

Kunkes said he's motivated by investing in others — and also knowing that they're investing in him. He's worked with many of his clients for over a decade, "and as they've grown, I've grown," he said.

"You're always going to go the extra mile for people that you like and know and care about," he said. And conversely, such longtime clients recognize that he's providing value and helping them, so they want to see him grow and succeed, he said.

"The more you're invested in helping them grow and understand their bigger picture and what their team is trying to do, the more successful the whole enterprise is going to be," Kunkes added.

How he became a banking attorney:

Kunkes was initially working on mergers and acquisitions in his first associate gig with Alston & Bird LLP. When he was looking to move laterally, Mayer Brown was the first to give him an offer, and he ended up working for finance guru Keith Oberkfell, who's since retired. Kunkes described Oberkfell as "the smartest guy in every room, even though he never acts like it."

"I did everything I could to become his trusted lieutenant," Kunkes said.

As Oberkfell's career was winding down, Kunkes' career was rising up, and he was getting to a place where he felt that he was getting the hang of things.

"Feeling like I was getting it and getting the mastery of it was really giving me a lot of encouragement and excitement about it," he said.

Kunkes said he didn't necessarily aspire to be a banking and finance lawyer, but "I just fell into a really fortunate position and I worked hard and learned a lot and enjoyed that."

"So much of life is dumb luck and just seizing opportunities," he said.

--As told to Hailey Konnath. Editing by Karin Roberts.

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2026 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,100 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2026, to be eligible for this year's award.
