

10 Partners On The Secret Of Success

Law360, New York (December 10, 2015, 1:32 PM ET) -- Success can seem elusive even once you've been promoted to partner. How do you bring in great clients? And how can you best serve your firm and the associates you work with? We reached out to partners, and asked them to share their secrets.

John "J.P." Hasman, Armstrong Teasdale LLP

"Once you have developed your own core competency and reputation, it is critical to invest in and reward the team around you. No successful partner has reached their full potential without an excellent support team, and if they tell you otherwise, they're fooling themselves and others. Partners need to evaluate themselves and each other on how they help their associates, paralegals and other support staff develop and grow, not just on how they develop business. The better your overall team, the more business you will see and better results you will achieve for your clients."

Sue Zabloudil, Akerman LLP

"The secret to partner success is being able to assemble and work with a team of people across multiple offices who have a common core vision and who understand and support the goals of the team. This is not to say that attorneys should not have individual goals, but it is important for the success of a partnership and meeting clients' and colleagues' expectations to align individual goals with the strategies of the entire team."

Erica Bose, Cox Castle & Nicholson LLP

"Aside from the importance of possessing strong lawyering skills, I think the key to making partner and being a successful partner is understanding your strengths and what you like most about your practice; play to your strengths in ways that allow you to focus on the aspects of practicing that you most enjoy. For example, if you excel at developing personal relationships, you may find that the best way to generate business is by getting to know the people who you interact with regularly and forging relationships based on common interests. In time, those relationships frequently lead to business opportunities."

Ron Chapman Jr., Ogletree Deakins Nash Smoak & Stewart PC

"Successful lawyers have many different styles, but they all share common traits: a passion for client service, a willingness to work extremely hard, and an intense desire to invest in their own career."

Whether it's an associate 'shadowing' a partner to gain valuable experience, a partner staying knowledgeable of the latest nuances in the law, or any lawyer nurturing genuine friendships with clients and prospective clients, those activities take time, for which there is no immediate reward. I don't know of any secret formula or short cut, but I do know that hard work and perseverance pay off in the long run."

Katherine Kimpel, Sanford Heisler Kimpel

"Keep in mind that law is a business. Plenty of people have legal know-how, but not everyone can make themselves indispensable to their particular practice or firm. And not everyone can stay indispensable. That takes vision, focus, determination and lots of hard work. In my own case, this meant as a young associate always seeking out more ways to help, more ways to contribute, more tasks to master. Now that I am a partner, I keep the same urgency myself, but also look out for ways I can help cultivate that drive in others."

Marc Maister, Irell & Manella LLP

"Success is a different recipe for everyone. My suggested ingredients include: respect, resilience, balance and hard work. Respect others and yourself. Treat people civilly no matter their stature. Control your own destiny. Don't make someone else the arbiter of your career. Be resilient and tough. Never give up. Unless it benefits your client. Find a balance and be healthy. Make your happiness a priority. Have a plan, don't let life happen to you. Work hard and smart. Be detail-oriented but see the big picture. Good writing and quality work wins cases. Be both a good attorney and good person."

Buffy Mims, Hollingsworth LLP

"To achieve success as a law firm partner, you must first understand what success means to each client. Understanding your client's business, business objectives, and having the ability to evaluate and manage risk will help you define a 'win' for your client. Conveying clear, well-reasoned and succinct recommendations will allow you to gain the trust and confidence of your clients. A successful partner is a problem solver who understands brevity and the value of each client's time. Finally, the bedrock of any successful partner is the support of a great team."

Jeffrey Testa, McCarter & English LLP

"My professional trajectory began traditionally — good education, a judicial clerkship and employment at a prestigious firm. But what started me on the road to success — bankruptcy cases worth hundreds of millions of dollars — was that I forged a strong early bond with a mentor who was, and is, a star. As trustee in high-profile bankruptcies, Charles Stanziale needed a strong counsel to the trustee, and he had me fill that role. I honed my understanding of the law, but at least as important, I got to observe Charlie's approach to finding solutions that passed muster with the court and made good business sense."

Ryan Tisch, Crowell & Moring LLP

"For me, partner success means making yourself relevant in every direction. Be relevant to clients; know what they need you to know; be there when they need you; and answer what they are asking — and what they're not. Relevant to your teams: Invest in younger lawyers; give guidance but facilitate agency; and help others get where they want to go. Relevant to the profession: Imagine how your firm will look

and work in the future; use the law to influence the world for good; and always ask, 'Why am I doing this?' Finally, remember: You aren't a successful partner if being a partner is all you do."

Peter Steinman, Michelman & Robinson LLP

"Successful lawyers need to master their craft by becoming expert in their practice areas. Equally as important, a successful partner needs to become an expert in a client's industry. A successful partner is not only an 'expert' lawyer, but one with deep industry knowledge. Such knowledge enables the lawyer to provide counsel above and beyond immediate legal needs, to a client's short- and long-term business goals, making the lawyer integral to the client. There are many competent lawyers, but few truly immerse themselves in a client's industry — that expertise separates the ordinary from the extraordinary lawyer."

--Editing by Mark Lebetkin.

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