



“Creating a strong team requires recognizing what is important to each of the players and ensuring they have time to find balance.”

Young Lawyers

Laura Granier, Young Lawyers Chair

Practicing Law is a Team Sport

In the words of Andrew Carnegie, teamwork is “the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.” I believe this to be true in all that we do, including the practice of law. In fact, one of the many positive attributes that lured me to Lionel Sawyer & Collins was the opportunity to be part of a great team led by an outstanding leader and lawyer –

Dan Reaser. Dan recruits team players who will give nothing but their best and who demonstrate an ability and a desire to work collaboratively to provide outstanding client service in a respectable and professional manner. As our practice group leader, Dan demonstrates the critical characteristics of a good team leader by, among other things, never expecting anything from his teammates that he isn’t willing to do himself – leading always by his own example.

Whether you are a solo practitioner, public defender, judge or district attorney, or work in a small, medium or large firm, you surely see the value in having team players who are always willing to help each other out in a pinch, give it “their all” every day to do the right thing, work hard and aim high to provide the best service possible in furtherance of justice. I believe that practicing law is best done as a team sport and all the general team rules apply. So, here are some of the things I have learned from Dan and other great leaders who have succeeded in building strong teams of great lawyers who are also good people.

1. You will only play your best if you work together with your team. One of the great things about practicing law is sharing the experience of working out difficult issues, brainstorming and sometimes even helping to shape new law and

policy through a variety of avenues in our three branches of government. While we are all pressed for time in our daily practice, group study chats and Socratic discussions shouldn’t end with law school. Read, analyze and evaluate and then ask questions, engage in dialogue, think outside the box and work with others to get a broad and varied perspective. Just like in law school, you can better your own understanding of a challenging issue by discussing it with others and often you’ll learn a lot from your colleagues’ ideas and by thinking things through with them. In the wise words of Dr. Seuss – “Think left and think right and think low and think high. Oh, the things you can think up if only you try!”

2. Nobody likes a ball hog. Just as I tell my six-year-old when playing basketball, you need to share in the excitement and the opportunities with your team members for the overall good of the team and your own development. This helps provide the best possible service and it also builds a strong environment in which all members of the team can flourish and contribute to the long-term success of the whole organization (not to mention the profession). Never miss an opportunity to empower your teammates. If young attorneys are chained to their desks and never allowed to experience their own arguments or examinations, it is good for neither the attorney nor the team. In the wise words of Theodore Roosevelt – the best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good people to do what needs to be done, and “self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it.” Why have people on the team if you do not value their abilities and

want them to grow into greatness? Supervising attorneys should provide opportunities for young lawyers to grow and young lawyers must speak up and seek out those opportunities and demonstrate their abilities.

3. Be a good sport. *Res Ipsa Loquitur*.
4. Always give 110 percent. I'm told Dan's favorite decoration in his office is his framed picture of Steve Prefontaine with the quote, "to give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the Gift." This epitomizes the motto of the practice group/team he has created with the emphasis on working together to "give it our all" and to, as a team, achieve the goal. Why would you ever expect or give anything less?
5. Be respectful of your teammates' time and build trust among team members by creating an atmosphere of openness and honesty. A strong team requires balanced and happy players who have lives outside of work that help round them out and keep them healthy and happy. Creating a strong team requires recognizing what is important to each of the players and ensuring they have time to find balance.
6. Promote each other. There is no "I" in "teamwork." The gratification will come with the team's and your teammates' success.
7. Always be there for each other and support all of your teammates. Believe in them and remind them to believe in themselves.
8. One last quote from Dr. Seuss to round out the list: "Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind." Your team should be a group of colleagues who will accept you and value your input and thoughts. You add great value to your team by being yourself and speaking your mind. Don't ever underestimate that or the value of what you will learn from listening to others. ■