

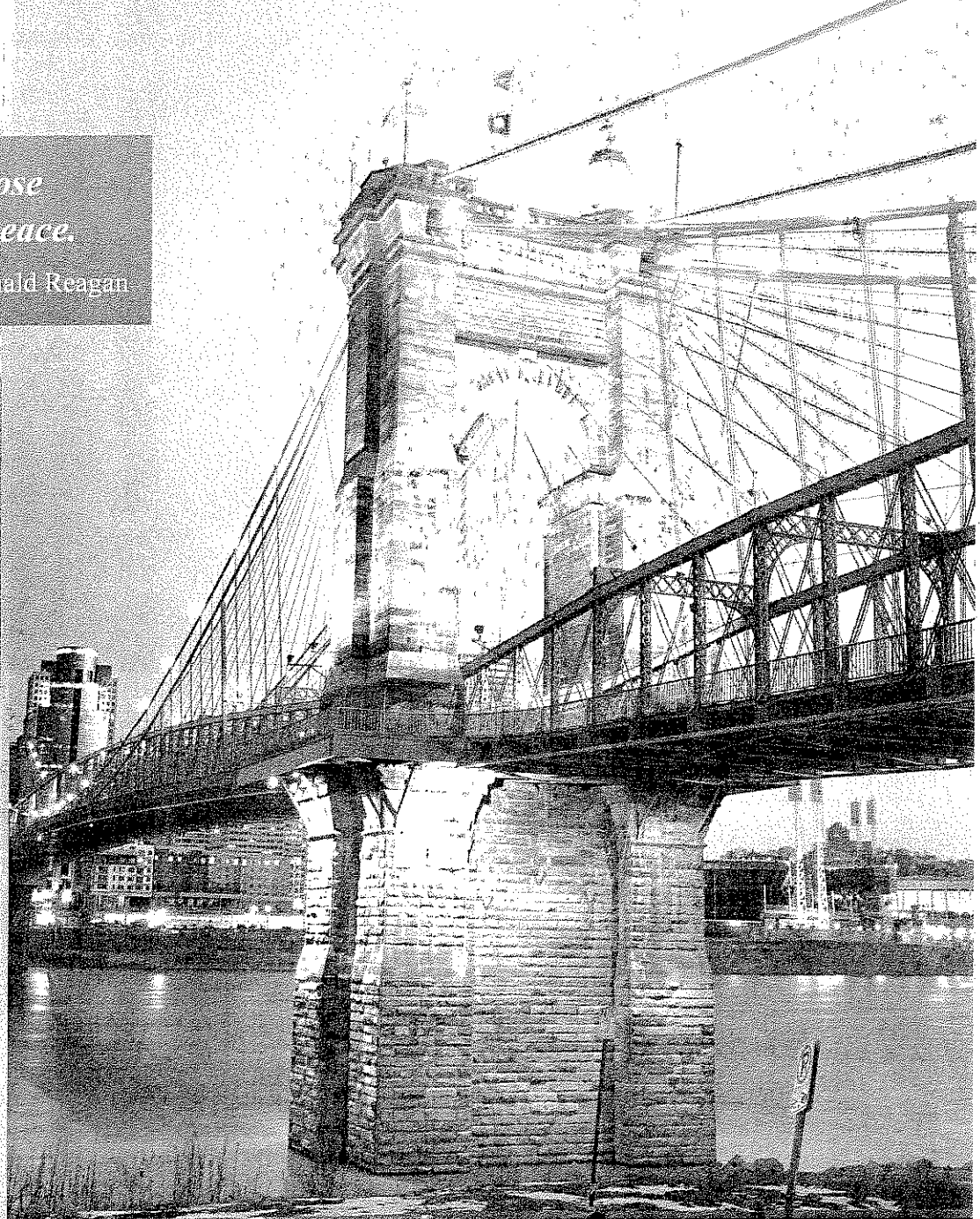
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*A people free to choose
will always choose peace.*

Ronald Reagan



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Successful attorneys exhibit certain traits and practices that have allowed them to become rainmakers and "stars" within their firms. As an associate, your ability to emulate and internalize many, if not all, of the traits below will help you become the "go to" person in your firm...and a shining star!

1. ALWAYS Go the Extra Mile

There's no substitute for hard work and producing an outstanding product for a partner or client. Don't just do what's expected of you, think "outside the box" and find ways to surprise the partner or client with your ingenuity and excellent work product. Your ability to think creatively and to consistently go the extra mile will set you apart from other associates.

2. Communication is the Key

Communicating well and often with partners and clients is critical to developing trust and a good rapport. Look for attorneys whose clients rave about them and assess how they manage client expectations and communications. Do they return phone calls in a timely manner? Do they exhibit good judgment? Do they communicate results (even if they are negative) early and continually during the process to keep clients in the loop? You are always better to err on the side of too much communication rather than not enough.

3. Follow-up Rules!

Always be proactive and follow up after completing an assignment. Don't expect a partner to hunt you down with a pat on the back for a job well done. Follow-up provides you with an opportunity to see that the project was completed to the satisfaction of the partner and will often generate even more work for you.

If you enjoyed the project, be proactive and volunteer for other related projects. This is a great way to become involved in work that you enjoy and develop some control over the direction of your practice.

4. Be a Sponge

Learn as much as you can from everyone you can! Smart associates will cultivate informal relationships with mentors. Find partners inside or outside your organization you respect and ask for their opinions and advice. Whether you meet for breakfast or go to lunch, make the time to surround yourself with experienced people who can help you with your career. Most people want to be asked for advice and will take the time to help you no matter how busy they are.



5. Be Strategic

Get plugged in...and read the publications your colleagues or clients are reading. This may sound like common sense, but it's critical that you be aware of current events in your practice area as well as in the world. If you work closely with a partner who reads The Wall Street Journal every day, then you should start reading it too. Partners will be pleasantly surprised when they ask you to research an issue they read in the paper and you are able to reveal that you read the same article. Again, this instills confidence and trust.

The same is true for clients. If you have a client in the food industry, it would be worthwhile tracking industry news and blogs in order to better advise your client. Too many associates don't take the time to stay abreast of current events in the world and that's where so many opportunities can be found.

6. Own Your Work

When the time comes, be sure to take ownership for all of your projects. This will include anticipating problems, offering solutions and even making mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes, it's how you handle the mistake that will demonstrate

who you are as a person. Always report a mistake as soon as possible, take full responsibility (no excuses or blaming) and prepare a solution to rectify the situation. Taking ownership for the mistake is often difficult but it will encourage confidence and allow for forgiveness. I recently read an article entitled the "ABC's of Handling Mistakes in Life"¹ that's worth repeating here:

- A. Acknowledge your error and accept responsibility for it. Don't try to fix the blame on other people or circumstances. When you fix the blame, you never fix the problem.
- B. Be gentle with yourself. This is not the first mistake you ever made, nor will it be the last.
- C. Correct the mistake and move on.

7. Step Outside Yourself

It's important to consistently schedule time to network with colleagues and potential clients. For so many years, I have listened to Don Klekamp say that "People do business with people they know and trust" and this is so true. If you don't see yourself as a good networker, take a class or talk with a mentor and see how you can improve your skills. People can't do business with you until you meet them, so get out there and network!

8. Don't Worry....Be Happy

No one wants to work with a complainer or a grouch. Partners remember associates who consistently demonstrate a pleasant disposition and work well as part of a team. Your attitude can make all the difference in the world.

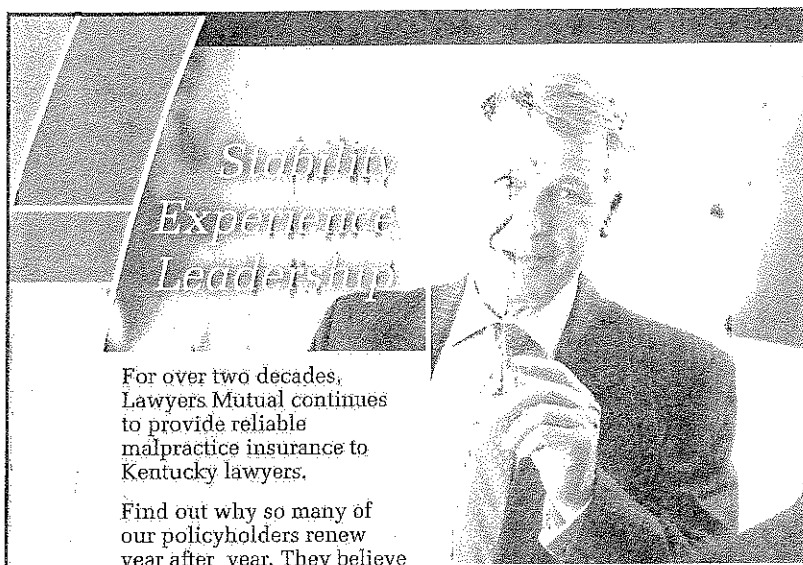
9. Be Future Ready

One of my favorite quotes is "Change is the only constant." In today's world, you must be prepared to adapt to the changes in the legal industry and your practice areas. Be aware of opportunities to educate yourself in new areas of law that will benefit your firm and/or your clients and set you apart from the crowd. Making time for your professional development is critical and always time well spent.

10. Put Yourself on the "To Do" List

Associate life can be very demanding and it's easy to forget about taking care of yourself. Our health is the greatest gift we have so be sure to take time to nurture your physical, mental and spiritual health. Spending time with family, exercising, proper rest and controlling stress are all important to ensuring your health and happiness.

¹ <http://lifesign.blogspot.com/2008/06/abcs-of-handling-mistakes-in-life.html>



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