



Insights: Publications

Milestones | A Conversation with Charles Gray

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Is being an attorney what you thought it would be? How are things different from what you imagined?

It's not totally what I thought it'd be. I always saw attorneys on tv and movies, but I never had direct experience with one. I never even stepped foot in a courtroom. My career has been different in its different stages. When I first started out, I was just figuring out what the job was. But when I turned to partnership, I started to think about what was good for the firm and other partners.

I love what I do. It's not at all what I thought it'd be like, but it's so much better than what I had hoped for!

What is your go-to piece of advice you have for upcoming associates?

First, keep in good contact with your undergrad and law school friends and associates. The name of the game is getting and keeping clients, so focus on building relationships with those around you and never underestimate the value of those relationships.

Second, be as generous with your time as possible. Treat everybody with **respect and kindness** because our interactions with people are always meaningful.

The final piece of advice is to try to interact with people face-to-face. Things are a little different in a post-pandemic world, and this might make me a dinosaur, but I think it's hard to substitute that type of relationship. You can make more meaningful, deeper connections with mentors, team members, and clients.

What has been the biggest difference between being an associate and being partner?

The biggest difference was my shift in focus. When you're an associate, your focus is on clients, working with partners, and meeting your billable hours. As you look toward partnership, you start to **build something bigger than yourself**. Adding to your business and keeping track of the numbers becomes a part of your practice. You build up the people around you and your mindset goes to what's good for the firm.

After becoming an attorney, what made you

When I was 19-21 years old, I lived in Taiwan on a church service mission. During that time, I learned Mandarin and got to connect with the Chinese people and culture. Running the Shanghai office is a culmination of some of my biggest passions.

How have things changed in your practice area of law from when you started practicing to now?

The commoditization of patent prosecution work. There's been many factors that have driven price changes since I started, and some of that forces you to be more innovative. You're working with a lot more teams and people, so you have to be creative with how you approach things. There are also consistent changes in litigation. With the advent of trolls and subsequently, company enforcements, there is a constant ebb and flow of government guidelines. Similarly, the shifts in the software space have made significant changes to the landscape and has reinvented the way we approach patents.

What are your hobbies/interests outside of law? How do those skills/interests help your practice?

I like to do Ironmans! The Ironman 70.3 Triathlon is a series of long-distance races consisting of a 1.2-mile-long swim, a 56-mile bike ride, and a 13.1-mile run. I find that always makes for an interesting conversation starter. It also gives me lots of opportunities to hang out with clients. I also have three children (17, 15, and 12) who are very engaged in various sporting events. I also am very active in my faith and engage in community service work.

All these things give me an outlet and help me keep balance in my life, which is important if I want to keep billing hours. I also find that if you know how to connect with and inspire people, it will translate directly to your work life. It's important to keep things in perspective and engage with what matters because clients can see that.

What drew you to Big Law and what has made you stay?

The truth is... dumb luck! When I was submitting resumes

want to stay working as an attorney?

It's really the firm. I have been at Kilpatrick for 17 years – so I am obviously a fan. I really like the people I work with, and the culture of the firm has made me choose Kilpatrick over any other option.

I used to be a computer programmer, and being an IP attorney lets me marry technology and the law. Innovation is a part of the game, so things are always changing, and it keeps my work interesting.

What is your proudest moment?

Without question, becoming a father. It truly makes life worth living. Career wise, I was extremely proud when I was named the Shanghai Office Managing Partner and we had the office open and running.

for various associateships in Denver, they were all Big Law firms. I was very oblivious as to what that even meant. But, through a series of fortunate events, I ended up and stayed in Big Law.

I think I excelled in Big Law because I know how to work hard. I love the fact that I can see exactly where I stand and where I can grow.

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