

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

It's not exactly what I thought it would be. In many instances, it's a lot more fun. I was worried that it would be extremely buttoned up and formal, and I have been happy to discover that's not the case. There are so many incredibly fun attorneys and all kinds of ways to insert some levity into the practice.

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

The number one piece of advice for junior associates is **don't forget your common sense at the door**. There can be a tendency to assume that because so much of the legal world is new and you've not experienced it before, that everything needs to be taught to you first. But there's so much of it that is just common sense: If you can't find it here, look there; If someone else isn't around, do it yourself; If it's due tonight, it has to get done one way or another. **There's often no magic to that, it's just applying common sense to find the most efficient way to get things done.**

How has being a practicing attorney been different from what you learned in law school? What is the most important thing you took away from your time in law school?

I definitely underestimated the extent to which creativity can apply. When you're in law school, I think there's a real tendency to try to absorb everything doctrinally so you can spit out the right answers when asked. But in practice, the right answer is not always quite so clear. There is a lot of room for creative problem solving to get great results for your client. A lot of it is outside the box and certainly nothing I would've learned in law school.

What's a story you've heard/witnessed during your tenure as an attorney that's always stuck with you?

In law school, many students are taught the IRAC method for writing: Introduction, rule, application, conclusion. So, when I started practicing, I was writing my drafts that way. Eventually, a senior litigation partner sat me down and said, "Listen, I know they taught you IRAC in law school, but now that you're practicing you need to learn a different acronym: FFFFFFFL."

When I asked him what that stood for, he told me **'fact, fact, fact, fact, fact, fact, fact, fact, law.'**

His point was to have enough facts to tell a compelling story, so that at the end of that story the judge is going to want to rule for you on any legal hook that you can provide. I have always remembered that to try to tell the most sympathetic and compelling story I can, which can be as or more important than the law.

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

Outside of my family and raising my kids, my biggest passion is music. I love playing music, listening to music, attending music, and talking about music of all types, from all places and all eras. **There is a saying that's attributed to Clarance Darrow, 'Inside every lawyer is the wreck of a poet.'**

I find, especially in intellectual property, there's many people with creative backgrounds, hobbies, and interests. So, it helps me bring a more creative approach to what I do and allows me to differentiate myself from people who are wired differently. It also allows me to connect with people who share those interests, which makes the practice that much more interesting and fun.

I think preparation is the most important thing I took away from my time in law school. There's ultimately a finite amount of information available for any given exam or any given matter, and the more that you can review ahead of time, the better you'll do.

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

Technology. When I started practicing it was Blackberries, non-video phone calls and printing out lots of documents. Now, there are video calls, internal chat software, paperless offices, and a million & one ways to collaborate on a single document.

I have to remain flexible and find ways to use new tools in an efficient way despite being used to prior technology. It's a challenge, but one that I try to stay on top of.

more interesting and fun.

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

Autonomy and the ability to really shape your career. As an associate, you only have so much leeway. You need to stay busy, and you need to do the work that people are providing you. As a partner, there's not always a guarantee that there will be work, but the opportunity to develop and create your own client relationships with people you enjoy and want to work with is revelatory.

What is your proudest moment?

My proudest moment is watching my 6-year-old daughter and 9-year-old son grow into excellent people.

Rob Potter
Partner on the Trademark & Copyright Team

