

New England Legal Awards 2025



DISTINGUISHED LEADER: DAVID TOLLEY Latham & Watkins



Courtesy photo

David Tolley, with Latham & Watkins

What inspired you to become a lawyer, and what keeps you inspired?

First, I like solving problems and being in the trenches with others while we do so. Being a lawyer has allowed me to do this year after year with amazing clients and colleagues. Being able to link arms with a client facing a major threat, whether it be from a government agency, an aggressive plaintiff or another party, and find our way to the other side all the while trying to preserve the client's core mission and values is the work that motivates me every day. Second, I have a particular passion and interest in the healthcare industry and being a lawyer has allowed me to partner with clients who are dedicated to improving health for all people and help them achieve their key objectives in the face of regulatory scrutiny, enforcement action or other threats to their business.

Please describe work on a recent case or issue that has made you proud.

Having the privilege of leading our growing Boston litigation department makes me extremely proud. We've grown

a lot in recent years, easily doubling in size in the last 4-5 years. I take my role as department chair seriously and believe it is my responsibility to do everything I can to help our colleagues in the department reach their maximum potential and pursue the careers they want whether inside or outside the firm. Seeing so many of our department members move into outstanding in-house roles, pursue careers in other disciplines or become my partners and counsel colleagues here at the firm brings me a lot of pride.

What qualities should a lawyer possess to become a successful and effective leader?

First, tell the truth. Be open with yourself, your colleagues and your clients about the issues that matter (What are the impediments to securing a great result? What can your team do better? What can you do better as a leader? Etc). Second, treat your clients' challenges and struggles as your challenges and struggles. Last, make sure you have things you care about that have nothing to do with the job. These things will open your mind, expand your perspective and make you better at everything!