

New England Legal Awards 2024

Distinguished Leader: Hans Brigham, Latham & Watkins

By ALM Staff

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

My inspiration to become a lawyer was rooted in my desire to meaningfully impact the world around me. The law, with its intricate challenges and profound implications on society and business, presented a compelling arena where I felt I could apply my analytical skills to effect positive change. I have enjoyed marrying the intellectual challenges of a transactional legal practice, with the practical, personality-driven process of getting parties to agree to a deal. In my career I have had the distinct honor of working with a wide array of medical technology companies, who are on the cutting edge of medical innovation. These companies are often at the forefront of research and development, working tirelessly to discover new treatments and cures for diseases that impact millions of lives around the world. Being a small part of that process is endlessly inspiring to me.

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

I was privileged to represent Artelon, Inc. and its board of directors in its recently-announced sale to Stryker. This was a thorny deal. As the company elected not to hire a financial advisor for the transaction I drew on my experience and industry insight to provide the guidance that advisors would typically give. The client was pleased with my expansive representation as we ended up with excellent financial and legal terms for our client (and a great deal for the buyer) after an extended, but professional, negotiation process.

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

A sense of humor is an essential quality for a lawyer who aspires to be a successful and effective leader. Being

a lawyer is inherently stressful, with high stakes and intense pressures. A sense of humor can be a powerful tool to diffuse tension, foster a positive work environment, and build camaraderie among team members.

Even more important is a strong commitment to mentoring. We owe it to the mentors that we had (or didn't have) while developing as young lawyers

to pay it forward to the next generation(s). The legal profession require so much learning to be an effective, leading lawyer on a deal or litigation matter, and much if not most of that learning is imparted in one-to-one sessions, or just through delivering thoughtful feedback. That mentorship should be focused on all lawyers in your charge, not just the ones that share your background, or who look like you. In fact, you better serve the profession by focusing that energy on others who might have additional inherent challenges to success.

Finally, humility and professionalism are critical. There is no bigger turn off for clients or "adversaries" with whom you are trying to get a deal done than an inflated sense of self worth (and the associated denigration of your counter-parties). Don't take yourself too seriously. Likewise, treat the lawyers on the other side the same way you wish to be treated — they are human beings too, and treating them with respect generally leads to them responding in kind.



Hans Brigham, with Latham & Watkins.

Courtesy photo