

NEW ENGLAND DISTINGUISHED LEADERS: BJ TRACH, LATHAM & WATKINS



BJ Trach, Global Chair of Latham & Watkins' Litigation & Trial Department, is one of the 2026 New England Distinguished Leaders award winners. Read a Q&A with him below.

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

My inspiration to become a litigator came from a combination of my love of helping people and my love of problem solving. When I was growing up, my mother dedicated her time outside of raising her six kids to working at a non-profit that provided support and resources to families with children with disabilities, and I was inspired by the sense of purpose and true joy she got from helping people in need. At the same time, I loved anything to do with problem solving: crossword puzzles, logic games, anything that required real mental effort to solve a complex problem. For me, being a lawyer is the perfect marriage of the two.

I remained inspired by the human experience of our work. Clients come to us facing

problems they cannot resolve alone, and I find real purpose in marshaling a dedicated team to help them—especially in the courtroom, where the stakes are highest.

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

Stepping into the role of Global Chair of Latham's Litigation & Trial Department is something that has made me enormously proud. I've spent much of my career at the firm helping the department build upon its upwards trajectory, working alongside exceptional leaders like Michele Johnson and many others. To follow in those footsteps and be entrusted with leading a litigation team of this scale and quality at a time when

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disputes are becoming increasingly complex and strategically important to clients is both humbling and exciting. What means the most to me is the opportunity to help preserve the collaborative culture across disciplines that has made the department so successful, while continuing to invest in the next generation of trial lawyers.

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

The most important quality for a leader is genuine empathy. When someone brings you their problem, you have to invest yourself fully—not just in the legal strategy, but in understanding what that person actually needs. Sometimes the path forward is aggressive

litigation; other times, it is simply being a trusted voice in a difficult moment. Effective leaders recognize that distinction and respond accordingly.

Similarly, leadership requires generosity. Mentoring younger lawyers, championing equal opportunity, and guiding people without expecting anything in return all strengthen the profession.

Finally, the best leaders, particularly of lawyers, are those that strive to inspire others to be the best versions of themselves. Rather than using their authority to dictate to people what they should do, the best leaders use their influence to help people improve and achieve their maximum potential.