

Making your mark

Leave a legacy by working on causes bigger than yourself

What does it mean to make your mark in the legal profession?

Martini: Making your mark should mean a whole lot more than just making a name for yourself, although that may be a part of it.

It is a means by which you leave an indelible impression on those around you, the profession and the community through helping and serving others. It is about working toward a cause that is bigger than yourself.

Susler: To make your mark means to leave an impression, a legacy. It is more than your reputation or your brand. It is the contribution you have made to the profession.

Most people, I think, strive to leave the world a better place. The work one does to accomplish that goal is making your mark.

We should acknowledge that there are ways to leave a negative mark in the profession. I think I can speak for both of us when I recommend striving to make a positive, meaningful difference for your clients as an outstanding attorney and professional.

Why is it important to make your mark?

Martini: As lawyers, we are in a uniquely powerful position to take the wonderful skill set each of us has and channel it toward the greater good. There is a lot of room for improving the legal representation all clients obtain from their lawyers as well as in the ways our communities serve those who are most in need.

I am a firm believer in leaving the world a better place than you found it. Through participating in various activities that you are passionate about, you can have a positive influence and meaningfully contribute to improving society.

You can make your mark both through the people whose lives you touch and through those individuals who they end up helping along the way.

The terrific people that you meet are the ones who pay it forward and who magnify the impact of your efforts.

Susler: There are so many reasons, both on societal and personal levels.

I think most people who become lawyers do so in order to make a positive difference for others. By helping clients work through their legal issues, you are making a difference for them, which I think is the



Inside Out

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Watch them talk more about this topic with the Better Government Association's Andy Shaw at chicagolawyer magazine.com. To submit a question for future columns, e-mail questions.insideout@gmail.com.

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most important aspect of an attorney's career.

This is how you leave your mark, and by doing so you simultaneously create your own sense of career satisfaction and fulfillment.

There are also economic benefits to making your mark.

Becoming known as a great lawyer and doing good deeds is just about the best

way to generate business. We can talk all we want about becoming lawyers to help others, but being a lawyer is also a job, and we need to have a steady stream of clients to generate sufficient income.

What are some effective ways to make your mark?

Martini: Contribute to the betterment of the profession, and leave a meaningful legacy.

There are many ways to do it.

By being a terrific lawyer, you can make a significant contribution to clients by helping them achieve their legal and business objectives, particularly at critical junctures during the lifecycle of their businesses.

You can also make your mark by professionally assisting individuals and the community on a local, national and even international level. You can achieve this by being actively involved in efforts focused on improving your employer's organization; through pro bono activities and mentoring; participating in diversity and inclusion efforts; providing thought leadership by writing and speaking to audiences on various topics of interest; and by being actively involved in trade association activities that focus on making a positive difference in the profession.

Susler: There are as many ways to make your mark as there are people in the world.

There are big, public ways and smaller, private ways. You might be a civil rights lawyer known for protecting clients' First and Fourth amendment rights.

You may establish legal-service agencies to serve traditionally underrepresented classes of society. You might also volunteer as a mentor to aspiring lawyers, whether they are in law school or still a grade-school dreamer — you can help turn those dreams into reality.

Simply being an example of the best of our profession leaves a positive and lasting impression on others and, in turn, inspires them to strive toward greatness. ■

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