

CHICAGO LAWYER®

INSIDE OUT

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HY IS IT IMPORTANT TO LEAVE A LEGACY?

Martini: First, it provides those around you, and those who will come along in the future, with a connection to the past, and to you. It is your way to contribute and to pay it forward to these individuals and to your institution. It is also a way to share your knowledge, experiences and lessons learned in the hope that you are making things easier and more useful for future generations. Finally, and a bit more selfishly, it is the way we all can leave an imprint of ourselves for the future. We all would like to believe that we will be remembered, and that it will be for important, positive things.

Susler: For those of us who became lawyers to try to make a positive difference for others, we hope that we are successful in some way and that a lifetime of hard work is not in vain. One's legacy, which ideally is positive, is a testament to what they have accomplished during their lifetime.

WHAT DOES LEGACY LOOK LIKE IN A LAW FIRM AND IN AND IN A LAW DEPARTMENT?

Martini: A law firm is all about its people — everyone who works at the firm plays a significant role in the mission and success of the institution. The people you recruit, mentor, train and promote provide ways for you to leave a legacy, regardless of whether or not you or they ultimately stay at the firm. It's not only about the impact that you make on them — it is the impact that they then go on to make in the world.

Clients are also mission-critical to leaving a legacy at a firm. These relationships provide another important way to leave a legacy. They often shift and change over time, like all relationships do, and providing a legacy helps bring continuity and strength to those ties.

Other ways to leave a legacy include developing and implementing frameworks, systems and processes that help make the operations side of the business easier, more efficient and long-lasting and to also take steps to enable the firm to grow and evolve as it needs to in order to remain competitive and to stay in existence for many years to come. This can include anything from opening new offices to mergers to making decisions to enter into new business lines.

Susler: It looks essentially the same for in-house lawyers. Additionally, for me, being in a small law department, my goal is that my legacy will reach beyond the law department and into the broader company. I do not know what it will look like after I am gone but I work on it by doing my best to provide excellent work that makes a dif-



LEAVING A LEGACY

Making a difference long after you're gone

By CHRISTINA L. MARTINI and DAVID G. SUSLER

ference for the company and our employees, and by being kind to everyone, regardless of their title or job. I keep in mind two underlying themes in my work and the way I interact with my colleagues: I try to make their job easier in some way, and I try to leave them with a positive impression of lawyers and the legal profession.

HOW ARE YOU CHOOSING TO GO ABOUT LEAVING A LEGACY IN YOUR LAW FIRM OR YOUR COMPANY?

Martini: With respect to client relationships, I continue to develop new ones and work on existing ones with the goal of having great relationships that continue over the long run. I also work hard, both on the local and national levels, to help drive my firm's recruiting efforts — with both new attorneys as well as lateral associates and partners. Mentoring is just as critical and something I focus on a lot — if you don't take the time to do it, it is impossible to have long-term success in your recruiting efforts. I also work with various groups in my firm to drive positive change, including with our women's and diversity/inclusion initiatives, as well as with our professional development group.

Susler: I strive to have a positive impact in my company as well as with the in-house bar more broadly. I work on my legacy by spending a great deal of my time on diversity and inclusion matters. Inside my company, this includes counseling and training management on ways to hire and manage

that emphasizes a positive view of employees as valuable to our overall success and by working to improve D&I [diversity and inclusion] and retention. Outside of work, I have helped run the ACC [Association of Corporate Counsel] Chicago chapter's diversity summer internship program for almost 15 years and have served on the Posse Foundation — Posse Chicago Leadership Council for over eight years. Both of these volunteer commitments include a tremendous amount of one-on-one and group mentoring with a strong focus on providing access to young leaders and lawyers of color who otherwise would not have access to networks that are critical for their career success. My legacy will be all those that I have mentored, who in turn will give back to others, ideally in repeating fashion, to help ensure we leave the world a better place than when we entered. [CL](#)

Christina L. Martini is a practicing attorney, author and columnist. She is chair of the Chicago intellectual property practice group and the national hiring partner of associate recruiting at DLA Piper and sits on its executive committee. She focuses on domestic and international trademark, copyright, domain name, internet, advertising and unfair competition law.

Martini's husband, **David G. Susler**, is associate general counsel with National Material L.P., a manufacturing company primarily engaged in steel processing and aluminum extrusion. He has a general practice, providing advice, counseling and training to all business sectors and operation.

To submit a question for future columns, e-mail questions.insideout@gmail.com