



Leadership in Law 2015: Jarrell B. Hammond

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Jerry Hammond is a problem solver who gets things done with insight, dignity and humility. Those traits may be why some of his clients are second- and third-generation clients. Jerry helps families plan for the future whether the need is for wealth preservation, business succession or estate administration. He's a trusted adviser on estate planning and probate, and peers observe that communication, responsiveness and results are hallmarks of his practice. Jerry commits personal time to teaching and instructing other lawyers in trial techniques, believing that a lawyer should never stop learning.

Why do you think second- and third-generation clients keep you as their attorney?

Many people I represent never see a lawyer for anything other than doing a will. Consequently, I think a lot of my clients consider me as the "family lawyer," so I just get passed down. I also like to think it has something to do with providing good personal service.

Your nomination mentions that you believe in picking up the phone and calling people. Why is that important in this digital age?

Well, that is just my style. For one thing, I don't type fast, and for another I feel you don't lose something in translation when you actually talk to someone versus emailing them. I like the give-and-take of a phone conversation, and you can clear up any miscommunication immediately.

Mentoring younger attorneys is beneficial for them, but what do you learn about yourself or the practice of law when you take on a mentoring role?

Mentoring is like a refresher course. You know the stuff, but when you relay it, when you have to teach

it, it makes you re-think things about yourself and your practice.

Is there a case that stands out over the years?

I did estate planning for a woman who became a quadriplegic after an accident. She was 7-months pregnant at the time, but ended up giving birth to a girl. The dad pretty much never anticipated having to be the main caregiver for a baby, his only child, but he did, and with the help of his family he did a great job. Further tragedy occurred when dad was driving with the now 10-year-old daughter, pulled over to the side of the road, and died of a heart attack. Mom had died a few years earlier. But the family stepped up again, we did a guardianship, and with a lot of sacrifice maintained her in her home. She is a beautiful and well-adjusted teenager now, and what was heartbreaking is now heart-warming. Just a great story about family.

If you couldn't be a lawyer, what would you do for a living?

I wanted to be a roadie for the Allman Brothers, but now that the band has broken up, I guess my dream is over.

Clients often expect lawyers to be accessible 24/7. How has this affected the practice of law?

Frankly, you have to lower your clients' expectations about accessibility. I know that is a heresy. I'm pretty accessible, returning calls and emails promptly and keeping the client informed about their case. So almost all my clients respect my time away from the office. They know when I'm back in the office, I will be in touch.



(IL photo/Eric Learned)

Why do you practice in the area of law that you do?

I like working with individuals and helping them in their personal lives. Like I mentioned before, this may be the only time they use a lawyer in their life, and I want it to be a positive experience.

What civic cause is the most important to you?

I am really passionate about Child Advocates. I've been on the board now for about 10 years, and my wife, Laura, has been a volunteer CASA (court appointed special advocate) for even longer than that. Child Advocates represents and gives a voice to kids in the Marion County Juvenile Court who have been the victims of abuse or neglect. There is nothing more important than protecting the well-being of these kids, and Child Advocates is great at what they do.

What's been the biggest change in the overall practice of law you've seen since you began?

Technology. The expectation of instantaneous response has really changed the practice. You have to be really disciplined to ignore it when you want to think.