

Are You a Go-Getter Lawyer?

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When our 2024 Dallas Bar Association President Bill Mateja asked me, just about a year ago, to spearhead what he called a “go-getter” series for the DBA, I was intrigued.

He told me that his theme for the year was getting bar members “back” to DBA headquarters for as many in-person events as possible, after such events took a big hit during the pandemic and the years following. In that regard, he wanted me to reflect on what I thought it meant to be a go-getter in today’s legal market and how it might be different today than when I started practicing law almost 40 years ago.

The legal landscape has certainly changed over the years. The dominant law firms of the late 1980s in Dallas either no longer exist or are no longer dominant. Many national firms that were barely known to Dallas lawyers decades ago are now the leading law firms in the city. My own firm, Winston & Strawn, didn’t have a presence outside Chicago when I started practicing law in Dallas and now counts Dallas as one of the firm’s largest and busiest offices. As co-chair of our firm’s litigation department here and abroad, I find myself helping to further the careers and success of not a handful of lawyers but nearly 500 of them.

As for the concept of go-getting, which Bill used as synonym for drive, ambition and hustle, the basic tenets of it are unchanged. To be a success in the legal profession hinges much more on how you work than where you work. Taking ownership of your own success and not expecting someone else to provide it for you is every bit as important today as it was 40 years ago. For me and many others my age, that has long meant being in the office and working long hours in and out of the office. Working from home meant taking work home, not working from home. But what the series revealed is that different generations have a different sense of what go-getting looks like today.

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