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From ‘imposter syndrome’ to pro bono work, here’s what drives this commercial litigator

ABOUT GIBSON, DUNN & CRUTCHER LLP

2018 revenue: \$1.8B

Number of
employees (DFW):
85

Website:
gibsondunn.com



Andrew LeGrand, Partner, Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP

BY ROB SCHNEIDER
Managing Editor - Events, Dallas Business Journal

As a child, Andrew LeGrand often imagined being a lawyer. He would play “court” with his two older sisters.

But it wasn’t until he joined Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher that he really knew what he wanted to do the rest of his career.

LeGrand, a commercial litigation partner for Gibson Dunn, represents corporate clients in a broad range of business disputes – in and outside of the courtroom.

“I work with some of the smartest, hardest-working, most talented people in the legal industry—many of whom are the foremost experts in their fields—and we consistently get called on to help our clients solve their most complex and difficult problems,” LeGrand said. “That is both incredibly challenging and incredibly rewarding.”

While pursuing a graduate degree in education, others suggested LeGrand pursue a law degree. But before he started law school, he participated in Sponsors for Educational Opportunity, a program for underrepresented law students.

“(It) exposed me to the practice of law at a full-service corporate firm,” LeGrand said. “I found the work fascinating, and I ultimately decided to join Gibson Dunn immediately after I graduated from law school.”

LeGrand also devotes time to pro bono work, primarily representing criminal defendants, people who are currently incarcerated and others affected by the criminal justice system.

Q&A with Andrew LeGrand, Partner, Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP

What has been the biggest challenge for you as a minority business leader?

The biggest challenge for me has been dealing with self-doubt. I don’t think that’s unique to minorities. I suspect everyone deals with “imposter syndrome” to some extent, especially when facing adversity or experiencing setbacks in your career.

My strategy is to stay focused, push through it and surround myself with people who encourage and support me. And I always look forward to the next opportunity to find success and deliver results for my clients, whether it’s by winning a case or by helping them solve a legal problem outside of court.

What needs to happen to get more minorities in leadership roles in your industry?

We need to continue to build the pipeline of minority lawyers in corporate law firms. That requires us to nourish, fully develop and retain the talent that is already in the pipeline. And it requires us to expand the pool by looking for talent in places that may have historically been overlooked.

I truly believe that success on diversity and inclusion is compounding. As some minorities find success and begin to fill leadership roles in a corporate environment, others feel supported and encouraged to do the same, especially when they are mentored and sponsored by other people in the organization.

What has been your biggest setback? How did it make you better?

I was appointed to represent a prisoner pro bono in a habeas appeal. These cases involve an alleged violation of the Constitution; guilt or innocence usually doesn’t matter because the remedy is just a new trial. In this particular case, however, I was absolutely convinced that the defendant was innocent. The appeal ultimately was not successful (because the standard is nearly impossible to meet under a federal statute called “AEDPA”), but the entire experience convinced me that I need to do more of this type of work, especially at the trial-court level, because everyone deserves a fair trial.

Who is your professional hero?

I have so many heroes, it’s difficult to choose one. The obvious ones are President Barack Obama and Justice Thurgood Marshall. But the person who has had the most profound impact on my career is my mentor, sponsor and current law-partner: Veronica Lewis. Veronica is a phenomenal lawyer who has impeccable judgment and consistently delivers extraordinary results for clients facing their most difficult legal issues. She epitomizes the right way to practice law. And she has been instrumental in helping me develop as a lawyer and find success in my career.

This Q&A has been edited for brevity and clarity.