

# My Advice to a Young Lawyer: Never Miss a Beat

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**“You only get better by playing. If you think you stink, you probably do.”**

**– Buddy Rich, legendary American jazz drummer**

I’m a securities litigation lawyer by day and – if I say so myself – a “hidden gem” of a drummer by night, still waiting for my band’s big break. In between playing sets with my bands through the years, I’ve learned how to embrace the rhythm of the business of law and play to my strengths.

The result is a career that I’m proud of, collaborating with scores of professionals whose work I admire. I thought I would offer a few principles that have guided me through my own career to the next generation of legal talent rising up in Los Angeles. In a time when many seem to struggle to find success and contentment personally and professionally, I’m hoping my words offer some encouragement.



• **First things first, love what you do.** If you love being a lawyer and your area of expertise, then every day – or most days – will be joyful. For me, I love being an entrepreneur, the business of law and trying new things since I bore easily.

• **There are no short cuts.** Success takes hard work. Consider the words of the legendary jazz drummer, Buddy Rich, “You only get better by playing.” Work hard to be the best that you can be in your field, which includes trying new approaches and continuing to grow a bit more every day.

My flexibility and open-mindedness enable me to build and lead offices and practice groups. For example, when COVID hit, I pivoted several times, first launching our Lease Litigation & Restructuring Practice, and then forming Baker McKenzie’s SPAC Rapid Respond Team to serve client’s needs.

• **Regardless of your age or stage in your career, you can mentor and motivate others to be the very best they can be.** Success doesn’t happen in a vacuum – it is a result of the synergies that are borne out of strong, collegial teams. If your goal is to be a rainmaker with a large practice, you need to be a part of a strong team because you won’t be able to do it alone.

I’m extremely grateful to work with such a fantastic team of lawyers and professionals. They are all incredibly smart, talented and hard working. I learn new and fresh approaches from them and from seeing cases through their eyes.

• **Give people the respect they deserve.** It surprises me how many people don’t realize that common courtesy is an often-overlooked key to success. Be immediately responsive to a client’s needs and above all else, listen to them. Whenever I meet with a client, I listen before I speak. I find out what their objective is in litigation. Most clients have a very specific business objective, and it’s critical to work with them to define it, because it’s not always immediately apparent. After that, it’s easy to figure out the best strategy to use to meet your client’s objective and get them across the finish line. That’s what winning is all about. It’s not your win – it’s your client’s win.

• **Don’t forget about your passions outside of the office.** For me, this is a combination of giving back to my community while keeping my dream alive of becoming the next Charlie Watts (Rolling Stones), Stewart Copeland (Police), Keith Moon (The Who) or John Bonham (Led Zeppelin).

My current band, Run BMC, competes annually in Law Rocks, a “battle of the bands” competition supporting local charities. In this year’s competition at the Whisky A Go Go on Sunset, the event raised \$230,000 in total. Run BMC raised \$17,000 specifically for L.A. Family Housing, which provides housing and related care for those who are homeless or on the verge of being homeless.

Above all else, find a work-life rhythm and never lose sight of the importance of being there for your family. Family is the ultimate support group. Law can be a very demanding profession. But there has to be a give and take. Yes, it's an honor to be recognized by the Los Angeles Business Journal. But if you don't have a wonderful family to celebrate with, what's the point?

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