



Tribute to Judge Sandson: A Retirement Speech You Wouldn't Let Anyone Give

By Melissa Rosenblum, Esq.

I have been extremely fortunate to have amazing mentors throughout my legal career. About ten years ago, I attended a CLE titled "10 Rules of Being an Effective Lawyer," that was presented by the Honorable Mark H. Sandson, J.S.C. (retired). Now, before you think it must have been like "An Evening at the Improv," let me tell you that Judge Sandson's very thoughtful and practical pointers have helped me to be a better lawyer. At the time Judge Sandson gave this CLE, I didn't really know him very well because he just started in criminal court. Today, I consider Judge Sandson a friend, mentor, life coach and a sometime truth-teller. Although finding the kernel of truth in a Sandsonism can be difficult.

I have to admit that I listened to Judge Sandson's "10 Rules of Being an Effective Lawyer" intently. I probably took notes because I am a big nerd. I can tell you with certainty that this CLE had an enormous influence on how I practice law today, how I treat my clients, adversaries and everyone I encounter in court, how I prepare my cases, and how I have worked and grown my business.

Right before Judge Sandson's retirement, I asked if he still had the speech from his CLE about being an effective lawyer and if so, could he send it to me. I was curious how many of his list of ten I incorporated into my business model. Of course, Judge Sandson did not have the speech saved, but he said, "I know that speech, I'll just send it to you." Within a few minutes, I received a long text from Judge Sandson entitled, "10 Rules of Being an Effective Lawyer." I now share it with you all. It is more entertaining if you read it with Judge Sandson's voice in your head.

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Continued page 2

Here are my “10 Rules of Being an Effective Lawyer”:

Rule #1

Always return phone calls and email, if possible, the same day.

Rule #2

Treat your adversaries with dignity and respect, particularly when they are not treating you the same way.

Rule #3

Often the simplest solution to a problem is the best, and the least expensive to the client who will appreciate it and come back to you in the future.

Rule #4

The best marketing strategy is “word of mouth”. You build your practice one satisfied client at a time. Every satisfied client will bring you 3 additional clients.

Rule #5

There is no such thing as a small client. Each client deserves your same level of attention and diligence.

Rule #6

In court or other proceeding at the conclusion of a matter ALWAYS go to your adversaries and shake hands (pre COVID) and say, ‘nice job’. Generally, a lot of other people including the judge are watching and will respect you, even (and especially) if your adversary does not return the favor.

Rule #7

Keep your time sheets up to date, every day, be fair and accurate. We are in a business where the only commodity you sell is your time.

Rule #8

In the office, in Court, in a public meeting, always be prepared. If you are not EVERYONE will know.

Rule #9

Don’t hold grudges. It is a waste of time and emotion. It is also bad business. Some of your best cases come from former adversaries and from their clients who have seen you conduct your affairs competently and professionally.

Rule #10

Be involved in your community. Be involved in causes in which you believe. Use your talents to advance “the good”. It is the right way to live your life and it is also good business as people will use your services if they respect you as a human being.

Continued page 3

I know you are thinking, how did this simple list equal two CLE credits. Well, Judge Sandson is not known for being so succinct and concise in speech. Judge Sandson, being Judge Sandson, told many stories and examples of lawyers using the rules and/or ignoring the rules. Important to note, if the story involved someone ignoring one of the rules, it never turned out well for that individual.

I have tried to incorporate these 10 simple rules into my daily practice of law. I am still working on perfecting a few from the list. I am sure Judge Sandson would be happy to tell me which ones I still need to work on. I know I am a better lawyer and better person not only from this CLE, but being fortunate enough to call Judge Sandson a mentor and a friend.

ACBA UPCOMING EVENTS



****April 30, 2021****

Law Day CLE Webinar 2-4pm.

Please find more information regarding this event on page 7

****May 13, 2021****

ACBA Awards Dinner, Linwood Country Club, 5:30pm.

Please find more information regarding this event on page 8

****June 17, 2021****

SAVE THE DATE: ACBA 2021 Installation of Officers and Trustees

More information is forthcoming