



A Brilliant Start to Empower Your Future.

YOUNG LAWYERS SECTION

KENTUCKY BAR ASSOCIATION

By Nathan Billings, Chair, KBA Young Lawyers Section

LAWYERS AS LEADERS:
“Everything rises and falls on leadership.” – John Maxwell

Jack Welch, former President and CEO of GE, believed that his single most important task was to identify and develop his successor and the next generation of leaders inside GE. In a word, he was first and foremost focused on leadership reproduction.

For 2010-2011, YLS launched a new initiative – “Lawyers as Leaders.” Lawyers, more than any other profession, are called to serve in leadership roles on boards and committees in non-profits, schools, churches, quasi-governmental agencies, public service, law firms (obviously), bar associations (national, state and local) and, increasingly, with their clients. In fact, there is growing evidence that more and more attorneys are leaving day-to-day legal practice to run corporations and non-profits. (See ABA Article on CEOs.) While many of these reasons are probably implicit, I notice little explicit discussion about why we, as lawyers, are called upon to lead.

The skills we use on daily basis (issue identification, risk assessment, written and oral communications) are a few of the same ones necessary for great leadership. (This is part of my theory why lawyers, more than other professions, are asked to serve on leadership boards and committees.) However, “leadership development” in other areas (vision casting, team building, employee morale, strategic planning, understanding financial statements, etc.) occurs more often than not, happenstance rather than intentionally. In fact, these other necessary skills are “picked up on the job”, if at all. Unfortunately, as we all know, neither law school nor the day-to-day “legal” work of an attorney

intentionally develops leadership character in us. Yet,

“Lawyers as Leaders” seeks to change this. Our initiative is designed to intentionally engage young lawyers, from the time they join the bar to when they leave the YLS, to develop and to prepare them for leadership roles by educating and exhorting them in all facets of leadership development. Likewise, the initiative hopes to engage more experienced attorney-leaders to intentionally assist in the leadership development of at least one young lawyer. We want to help our generation of lawyers become “Level Five” type leaders. (Collins, Jim “Good to Great.”)

Now, candidly, the program is not intended, nor do I believe, that Lawyers as Leaders will miraculously transform all young lawyers into Level Five leaders. But, intentionally engaging young lawyers today will help ensure more successful leaders tomorrow.

“Lawyers as Leaders” was formally launched at the YLS Luncheon at the 2010 Young Lawyers Conference during KBA Convention. As we begin the 2010-2011 year, my challenge to all attorneys is to become intentional about developing the next generation of lawyers for our Commonwealth.

If you’re a “not so young lawyer,” hand-select at least one young attorney to mentor. Make time monthly to meet with him/her; invite them to attend board or committee meetings as guests; help them to craft a leadership development plan for their career.

If you’re a “young lawyer,” consider volunteering for the YLS on one of our committees and watch for our Lawyers as Leaders activities this coming year.

If you would like to become more involved in YLS, or with the Lawyers as Leaders initiative, please contact me at nbillings@lckgky.com or 859-225-5240. ☎

2010-11 YLS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Officers for the KBA’s Young Lawyers Section are, from left, Jennifer Howard Moore, past chair; Nathan Billings, current chair; Rebekkah Rechter, chair-elect; Jacquelyn S. Wright, vice chair and Carl Frazier, secretary/treasurer.