

## Role Models

*Three rules of work:*

*Out of clutter, find simplicity; from discord, find harmony;  
in the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.*

—Albert Einstein

As we grind through our work days bearing the weight of clients' troubles, a little inspiration never hurts. Maybe just the right phrase can change your perspective. My good friend Tom Overley often sends out inspiring quotes, and the words let us know that others have faced far greater difficulties than whatever the problems we have on a given day.

Role models can be another source of inspiration. James Sandman, former president of the District of Columbia Bar, wrote that attorney role models share certain traits that we all admire:

- they have integrity;
- they have a keen understanding of the law as a service profession;
- they are respectful to all;
- they value the differences among people;
- they give back to their community and;
- they enjoy what they do.

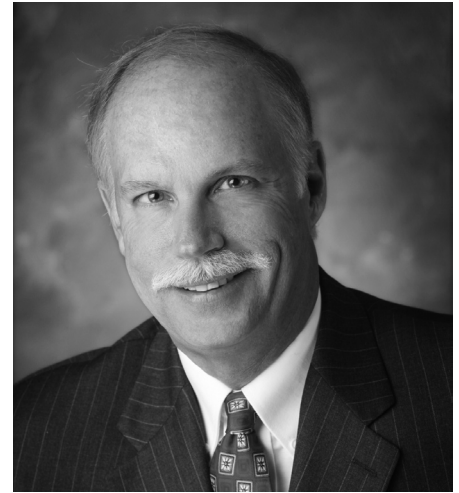
This list is not exhaustive, the author writes, but these qualities are critical components of the success—and happiness—of many of our most admired lawyers. These are factors that go beyond merely being recognized as an expert in a given field or achieving successful results for clients. By observing the way great lawyers practice (or even watching Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*), we can be inspired to do more with our own professional lives.



*Service with a smile: Michael Yavorcik finishes bagging groceries for a customer.*

But our role models don't have to be attorneys. There is a young man out there who inspires me daily. He does not have a law degree or a college degree. He doesn't even have a driver's license. My 21 year old son Michael works as a bagger at Kroger's. Diagnosed with autism at age 3, he was one of the first special education students to be included in "regular" classes in the Ottawa Hills schools. Michael has been employed at the Bancroft Street-Holland-Sylvania Road store for the last four years, and he has put his own special "stamp" on the job.

He uses his extraordinary memory to greet customers by name and often asks about their kids. He is on time for work everyday (more punctual than I will ever be). He has never complained



*James E. Yavorcik*

about his job once, even on days he has to round up carts from the parking lot during inclement weather. When I am out socially, folks regularly tell me how interacting with Michael at the store brightens their day. Some will even wait a little longer at the check-out counter to be in his line. In contrast to those who would view this kind of work as boring and mundane, Michael loves his job and it shows.

In his own small way, Michael exhibits many of the attributes that we admire in role models as mentioned above. Sometimes the teacher can learn from the student and I've learned that focusing in on the qualities that Michael exhibits in his job can make me better at mine.

That's why I chose to write about Michael and role models this month. "Becoming a better lawyer" is the core reason why we join a bar association. All of us strive to do more—and to learn more—to help our clients and improve the justice system we work in. Acknowledging the values of those who truly serve others will not only make us better lawyers but will help us train and develop a new generation of role models.