

BECOMING PARTNER



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MANY OF US SPEND OUR CAREERS SEEKING OUT PARTNERSHIPS WITHIN OUR FIRM. For some, this is not a professional goal because we choose other career paths, such as working in the public sector, as in-house counsel, or as a solo practitioner. Regardless, the path toward being a *contributing* partner is for all lawyers.

What does it mean to be a contributing partner? Does it mean you share in the obstacles you overcome and work together to achieve a common goal? Do you share in the benefits of success? Do you sometimes have to make sacrifices? The answers to these questions are surely obvious. But, these questions are not just directed toward being a legal partner within a law firm. Even though the principles of teamwork—sharing in successes and failures, and making sacrifices for success—apply to being a solid contributing partner within a law firm, this is not the type of partnership I am referring to.

The type of contributing partner all lawyers need to strive to be is one within the community. We need to apply the principles of sacrifice, teamwork, and success to our regions. I know this is an old song being played on a worn guitar being sung by a young lawyer, but just because a song is old and the lawyer is young doesn't mean it shouldn't still be sung and played. As a matter of fact, lawyers have been a contributing part of our society since our brethren Founding Fathers began the arduous task of drafting the Declaration of Independence. So, in honor of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, as well as Merle Haggard and Willie Nelson, I want to sing and play this tune loud for all to hear.

Being a contributing partner means fulfilling a need in whatever form is necessary. I challenge all lawyers to make at least one sacrifice a year to meet the needs that our communities have. These sacrifices are not difficult. It's not like you are being asked to fly to Antarctica to save sweaty penguins. It is sometimes as simple as playing in a golf tournament to raise money for a good cause. Sometimes it requires more of a sacrifice, such as volunteering a couple of weekends at a local food pantry or children's home, or serving on a nonprofit board. And other times, it is as easy as responding to one of our monthly bar newsletters asking for volunteers to work a booth.

So, don't go singing the workin' man blues at the end of a hard week, and don't say there's nothing you can do about it now. Jefferson and Adams risked their lives for their sacrifices, and you can easily sacrifice an evening or Saturday morning to help those less fortunate as a Declaration of Doing Good (cheesy, but true). As I finish writing this, I am wearing golf shoes and a golf hat because it is time to go play in a scramble tournament benefiting Communities in Schools. My fourteen missed putts won't move our country toward independence or the world toward peace, but they will help ensure that money goes toward the nearly 20,000 kids in public schools in Denton and Wise counties who are at risk for dropping out.

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