

► Heavy workloads and client stories can affect attorneys physically and psychologically. It is important to actively work to stay healthy. For more information, go to texasbar.com/tlap and click on “wellness.”

Esprit de Corps

Fitness as team building.

BY **KENNETH RAGGIO**

Many lawyers spend at least as much time at the office or dealing with their “day jobs” as they do on any other activity in their lives. So it makes sense for that area to be as enjoyable as possible. Many have used fitness to strengthen the bonds within that block of life—which can be called your “legal team.”

The book *Younger Next Year*, by Chris Crowley and Henry Lodge, has the premise that if people take better care of themselves now, they will live longer, healthier lives, with the end being like falling off a cliff as opposed to a slow, continual, miserable decline. Seven rules suggest how to accomplish this feat, with the sixth being “connect and commit.” Chapter 17 of the book stands for the proposition that if we don’t care, then we are making a huge mistake that puts us back on the slope of continual decline that a physical exercise routine was meant to forestall. “Caring means caring about other people and being involved with them. ... Acting like the pack animals we are, right to the end,” the book says.

Combining our “day jobs” with caring and fitness.

Strasburger & Price in Dallas has for years put together a team of firm members who travel to Oregon each summer to run the Hood to Coast Relay, one of the largest and longest relay races in the world. Since 2010, more than 40 Strasburger attorneys, their friends and families, as well as clients who have become friends, have taken to the road for fun, fitness, and fundraising. Attendees who are not running a race-leg ride along in the “Lawyers on the Lam” team vans. Long hours in those vehicles lead to jokes about the team developing van endurance rather than physical stamina. Jokes aside, all of the runners maintain a rigorous



The Texas Bar state champion football team in 1980.

PHOTO BY DAN SUSIE

training regimen to prepare for the race. The team’s fitness goals are just one aspect of Strasburger’s wellness initiatives, which range from a formal wellness program to subsidizing healthy snacks in the office.

Houston’s Susman Godfrey has been a leader in this area for years. Back in the 1970s, founder Steve Susman realized that a fit office is a productive one, and ran the firm that way. Susman began training to run marathons, and the firm offered new associates memberships in health clubs and sponsored skiing, biking, rafting, hiking, and scuba-diving retreats—all in the interest of keeping their attorneys healthy. Some of their firm bike retreats have been in France and Italy. And then there’s the BP MS150. For years the firm has sponsored a team to cycle the two-day 180-mile ride from Houston to Austin, having up to 40 firm members participate. Over the years, the firm has raised \$1.1 million for the event.

A legal team doesn’t have to travel like the Strasburger or Susman firms: It can do activities in its own town—or even in the office.

A couple of times each year, stair-climb races are organized in many Texas cities to benefit charities, with the participants walking or double-stepping up buildings. The Big D Climb at the Bank of America Tower in Dallas—70 stories and 1,254 steps—is one example. It is hard. One needs to train to do a stair climb. Dallas’s Goranson Bain formed a

team to do it. Other firm members who didn’t participate regularly walk the 14 flights of stairs in their office building.

Another example of caring and committing is participating in a State Bar or local bar activity—teams like the troupe that annually presents *Bar None* in Dallas and athletic teams participating in bar-only competitions, where leagues still flourish around the major cities.

The photo above appeared in the *Texas Bar Journal*. It shows the then-Texas Bar state champion football team, which happened to also be the Dallas Bar league champs. This particular team had not more than two players from the same firm; the commitment to and caring for others formed friendships. Nearly everyone in the picture is still practicing in Dallas and all are still reasonably—if not more—fit.

Lifelong friendships and memories; esprit de corps with your coworkers; feeling better every day from regular physical activity; helping benefit a charity. These are all benefits of forming a legal team—which you may see at the gym after office hours. **TBJ**

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