

Distinguished Leader: David Scherl

Chairman and Managing Partner, Morrison Cohen

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What are some of your proudest recent achievements? After 17 years heading Morrison Cohen and guiding the firm through a period of immense growth, I'm proud to lay the groundwork for the firm's future success by doing something that most firm leaders don't do at the peak of their careers—stepping aside and ushering in the next generation of firm leaders. It has been an honor to lead the firm through its evolution into a key player in the corporate, litigation and real estate practice areas. I'm proud to transition management of a great firm and to allow a group of partners that the firm's clients widely consider as "go-to" talent the opportunity to take the firm even further.

What does it mean to be a leader? A good leader leads by example, as it is important to set the right standards for an organization to thrive and grow. A good leader also has the insight to know when to round out a leadership team by offering opportunity and incentives for others to play important roles. Creating leaders from the next generation is the endgame, which ensures the continued and long-term success of any organization.

Name a lawyer or mentor whose leadership inspired you. I have learned from so many accomplished leaders across a wide variety of industries as well as in the sports world. I have observed behaviors that I want to emulate from positive data points, and behaviors or decisions that I wanted to avoid from less positive data points. The leaders that I have admired include President Reagan, former General Electric CEO Jack Welch, and Northwestern football coaches Gary Barnett and Randy Walker. What they all had in common was a balanced approach that was able to build teams, motivate and be tough/demanding. To a person, all were considered by their team members to be fair. To me, that is leadership: Setting a course that can inspire success and having colleagues know what they can expect.

How are the business and profession of law changing, and how should lawyers adapt for the future? More and more, legal work is viewed as a commodity, and I



believe that client service can be a key differentiator. It is more important than ever to communicate your law firm model, including its service offerings and value proposition. Lawyers need to differentiate themselves and their firm from their competitors. At Morrison Cohen, we pride ourselves on our level of client responsiveness and on our ability to provide sound, commercially minded advice for every business challenge. All of our client matters get senior-level attention, which allows the client to get to the "right place" efficiently and more quickly than many other sophisticated law firms. Our reputation for providing excellent commercial advice is a result of our constant focus on our deal or case execution that centers on our clients' unique needs and interests.

What is the best advice for someone considering a career in law, or someone already in the profession who is seeking to make a greater impact? Always strive to be an A-plus attorney and advisor. Then recognize that playing at the top level is an expected commodity, and that in order to separate yourself from the rest of the top lawyers you must service the heck out of your clients and sell, sell, sell. We are all salespeople, but the key in servicing a client and having recurring business is dedication to your client above almost anything else and providing the wisdom and commercial advice for the client's ongoing success. What is in their best interest? What might be helpful to them or to their success?