

LEADERSHIP IN LAW 2023: Elizabeth Roberson

May 18, 2023

KEYWORDS [LEADERSHIP IN LAW](#) / [LEADERSHIP IN LAW 2023](#)



(IL photo/Chad Williams)

Krieg DeVault LLP

Valparaiso University School of Law, 2016

What's the best advice you've ever received?

The best advice I've ever received is that you must be present to win. This means that not only do you need to show up, but you also need to bring your whole self and dedication to everything you do. You must "be present" in your interactions and at events, which means fending off possible distractions demanding your attention. Putting the advice into practice is never easy, and I can't say I have a 100% success rate. Still, I remember this advice often, and it shapes how I approach my commitments and time. I make a concerted effort to shut out as many distractions as possible and live in the moment, whether it's a work or personal commitment. I also apply this advice to budget my time and prioritize opportunities in my career and personal life.

What is something you wish people knew about lawyers?

I think people sometimes get the wrong impression of how lawyers interact with one another from TV shows and movies. Unlike some of what you see on TV shows or movies, most lawyers are collegial and friendly toward one another. Even as an adversary, you don't have to be rude or unprofessional to an opponent to effectively advocate for your client.

0 Free Articles
Remaining

Get Full Digital Access to The Indiana Lawyer! [Subscribe Now](#)



What drew you to employment law, and what do you enjoy about that practice area?

I worked on a number of employment cases while I was with the Office of the Indiana Attorney General for three years. Employment law appealed to me because the cases were interesting and challenging, and it was through those cases I realized I wanted to focus my practice in employment law. I knew I would have the opportunity to grow my skills as a lawyer and valued the chance to help employers, and sometimes employees, in times of need. Another factor that drew me to employment law is the counseling and training aspect. In my role, I work with employers to counsel them on their day-to-day employment decisions and assist in policy drafting and training. I enjoy the variety that employment law offers. No day or issue is the same. Plus, the ever-changing laws that govern all aspects of employment law drive my passion to learn and help employers provide the best workplace for their employees.

Tell us about your work with Exodus Refugee Immigration— why is that work important to you?

I started volunteering for Exodus Refugee Immigration through my involvement with the Indianapolis Bar Association's Young Lawyers Division Executive Board. Exodus is an organization dedicated to protecting human rights by assisting with the resettlement needs of refugees and other displaced people fleeing persecution, injustice and war. When a refugee arrives in Indiana, Exodus assists with housing, clothing, basic needs, education, and eventually assisting each family or individual in being able to live and work in Indiana independent of Exodus' funds or assistance. My volunteer work for Exodus through YLD has primarily involved organizing clothing donations for new arrivals.

I truly value this volunteer work because Exodus provides so much to individuals in need. It helps families and individuals escape from an environment that most in Indiana could never even imagine and allows them a second chance to build a happy and successful life here in Indiana. The honor to have any role in someone's resettlement is so meaningful to me.

Why did you decide to enter the legal profession?

I became a lawyer because I am a problem-solver and wanted to be the person others turned to for help in times of need. As a child, I often helped friends talk through their issues, which I continue to do as an adult. After a long day at work, it feels great to know that you have made a difference in someone's life.

People come to lawyers in the most vulnerable times in their lives, and I enjoy being able to counsel and help in those times of need. As an employment lawyer, I often counsel employers, and sometimes employees, on decisions that could affect a company's long-term goals, business model or an individual's career. In my role, I frequently serve as an adviser, someone who will listen and understand the obstacles being faced. This means that my legal advice helps solve the issue presented within the context of the bigger picture, making my advice more effective. I find it immensely rewarding to couple my

natural problem-solving skills and my legal skills to help employers create the best workplace for their employees and the public.

If you hadn't pursued a legal career, what would you be doing?

I likely would have ended up doing something related to economics, as I was an economics (and political science) major in college. I enjoyed the various types of consulting roles businesses rely on to understand the economics and improve their business performance.

Additionally, and unrelated to my college degree, I would enjoy being an event planner. I love brainstorming ideas and putting together and executing a plan for an event, whether it be as simple as a birthday party or as intricate as a multiday wedding celebration. It is so rewarding to see all the planning come to fruition in the end result.

What makes a good lawyer?

To be a good lawyer, you must have great communication skills, practice empathy, and have a passion for the job and continued education.

Good lawyers communicate effectively and efficiently with their clients, the court, their adversaries and their peers. To be a great communicator, you have to be good at listening, issue spotting, public speaking and, of course, writing. An effective communicator must also be present and attentive to understand the audience and how best to communicate effectively. Effective communication is about how you say something, the message conveyed, why you say it, when you say it, your body language and what you don't say. Good lawyers bring value to their clients and the legal community by having great communication skills.

A good lawyer must also be empathetic. Clients approach us in their time of need and sometimes just need to be heard and feel validated. Good lawyers practice empathy to help ease the stress clients often feel. As Theodore Roosevelt once said, "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care." Empathetic lawyers are more effective because they can better understand their clients' needs and wants and can provide clients with value well beyond their knowledge of the law.

A good lawyer also has a passion for their job and continued education in the law. Being a lawyer is not easy. It sometimes demands long hours and sacrifices. But if you are passionate about what you do and you enjoy your work, it makes those busy times much easier and you can continue showing up as your best self for clients. You are more dedicated if you are passionate about what you do. Additionally, a good lawyer aspires and remains eager to learn more about the law, their clients and ways to be more effective. A good lawyer must have a passion to continue learning and achieving.

Who is someone who has inspired you in your career?

My mother is my biggest inspiration and role model. Although she is not a lawyer, she has served as a guiding light for my work ethic and hard work throughout my career. My mother had two and three jobs at a time to provide for our family as a single mom. And

sporting event, award ceremony and school function I had as a child — and she still does today for me and my family. She instilled in me that success takes hard work and dedication, but that it doesn't have to come at the sacrifice of family time.

Today, I strive to model the same values that my mom established in me in my career and for my family.

Do you have a secret talent?

I am not sure it would be considered “secret,” but I am good at DIY and various house projects. Maybe it's the problem-solver in me, but I can always seem to find something that needs to be done and thoroughly enjoy the process of completing those types of hands-on projects.

How do you spend your free time?

I spend my free time with my two children (Griffin and Madelynn), my husband (Ross) and our two dogs (Gracie and Paisley). You can find us out on a family walk (usually on the Monon Trail), at a local park, at the Children's Museum, or out exploring new local venues and restaurants. •

[Read more Leadership in Law profiles.](#)