

## UNSUNG HEROS

### Aligning Diverse Interests Is the Soul of What Lawyers Do Every Day, Says Brian Yarzab

“Sometimes a good lawyer who drafts a good agreement or who gives some good advice to a client has much the same impact as the big verdict or settlement that, as a result, never came to pass.”

By ALM Staff

*Brian Yarzab, Counsel with Pashman Stein Walder Hayden, is a Law Journal Unsung Hero honoree. The below responses were lightly edited for clarity and style.*

*Law practice is often a team endeavor. What has been your experience with teamwork in the law?*

Teamwork is indispensable to the practice of law, which has become so complex and nuanced that few individuals could discharge their professional duties alone. At Pashman Stein Walder Hayden, I’m just a small part of a talented roster of lawyers, which boasts a depth and breadth of knowledge that I couldn’t



**Brian J. Yarzab counsel with Pashman Stein Walder Hayden**

accumulate in a dozen lifetimes. Our firm is often engaged in elaborate projects that command the attention of several lawyers—sometimes across several practice areas. Because our firm culture emphasizes collaboration and

teamwork, our work product is greater than the sum of our individual contributions.

But teamwork isn’t confined to the four corners of the office. As a transactional lawyer, I often need to work with teams of professionals

to accomplish our clients' goals, and even with lawyers across the conference table or courtroom aisle. Indeed, the alignment of diverse interests is the essence of teamwork and the soul of what lawyers do every day.

***What types of work done at law firms and other organizations are commonly underappreciated?***

It's human nature to celebrate the big victories in life. Law firms and lawyers celebrate when we win big motions or verdicts or appeals, when we negotiate big settlements, when we close big deals, or when we land big clients or contract awards. Similar achievements exist in other organizations both inside and outside of the law.

We often recognize those who contribute to these triumphs, but sometimes we lose sight of those whose involvement was less visible. As lawyers, we stand on

the shoulders of giants, but we also stand on the shoulders of everyone else who keeps our firms afloat—from our administrative staffs, to our service providers and vendors, to our colleagues whose successes are seldom reduced to capstone moments like trial verdicts. Sometimes a good lawyer who drafts a good agreement or who gives some good advice to a client has much the same impact as the big verdict or settlement that, as a result, never came to pass.

***What must firms do to ensure that lawyers remain engaged with pro bono work, their communities and their families?***

Law firms should recognize that community engagement and pro bono work aren't extracurricular activities for lawyers. These activities are essential to what it means to be a lawyer. As lawyers, we bear obligations not only

to our clients and our firms, but also to our profession and our communities. That's the solemn commitment we all undertake when we're admitted to the bar.

Oftentimes, these activities can lead to business development opportunities, but it's important for law firms to appreciate their inherent value outside of business development. The Justice Gary S. Stein Public Interest Center at Pashman Stein Walder Hayden exemplifies this ideal commitment to the public interest.

Of course, no one should ignore the economic realities of the practice of law, but the less we expect lawyers to fulfill these obligations outside of "work," and the more we treat these obligations as essential to our work itself, the better our profession as a whole—and the better engaged we can remain with our communities, our families, and ourselves.