

KTalks



Welcome to KTalks. This series reaches out to leaders in the business and legal communities with five questions to seek their insight on matters ranging from career paths, diversity, and mentoring, to work/life balance.

Randy Eaddy is President and CEO of [The Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County](#) – the oldest arts council in the country with an annual budget of approximately \$3.5 million. For over 25 years, Randy was an attorney at Kilpatrick Townsend where he focused his practice on securities and capital formation transactions, disclosure compliance, mergers and acquisitions, strategic business alliances and corporate governance advice in complex situations. He also worked frequently with the firm’s Triad-based Investment Management Team on complex governance and mergers & acquisitions matters. Randy received his undergraduate degree from Furman University and then attended Harvard Law School, where he was an editor of the *Harvard Law Review*. He retired from Kilpatrick Townsend in 2018.

This is part one of a two-part conversation with Randy.

1

What was the most valuable skillset that you learned working at Kilpatrick Townsend that translates to your current position?

Systematic identification and analysis of all issues that affect a situation, keeping competing positions in mind, while simultaneously planning for and promoting the preferred outcome.

Why did you choose to work at a large law firm?

I was fascinated by many areas of the law, and while I could not practice in each of them, I wanted to be in an environment where colleagues were working in most of those areas. I could share vicariously in their practice experiences and expand my knowledge by doing so.

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Do you have any advice for law firms about how to make law firms more greatly reflect the diversity of their clients?

I spoke and wrote extensively about diversity for over 20 years, and my principal theme throughout was that pursuing meaningful diversity must be systematic, sustained and based on a belief in the “business case” for diversity. That means aligning one’s commitment to diversity with the bottom-line core business interests and values of your organization. For a law firm, that necessarily includes, but does not end with, taking stock of what diversity truly means to (and looks like) at its significant clients.

What was the best piece of advice you received as a new lawyer?

You can’t avoid a difficult issue or situation by ignoring it or trying to hide from it. You must meet it head on. Over time, I translated that multi-faceted lesson into what I call my “preemptive strike” approach to most difficult situations. For example, be proactive and initiate that difficult conversation with a client or whomever, rather than trying to hide from it, or waiting until the other person raises it, no matter how much you may dread the situation. Among other things, you are likely to have more control when you take the lead.

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How does your legal expertise help you in your current position?

My corporate/securities and M&A practice taught me both the value of (and processes for) systematically planning and organizing for a complex transaction, project or initiative; how to shepherd others through the implementation stages; and then how to write persuasively about what occurred. Those skills are useful in virtually any environment, and they do not exist naturally in most people; they have to be learned.