

## Rainmaker Q&A: White And Williams' Nancy Conrad

*Law360, New York (September 09, 2013, 11:23 AM ET)* -- Nancy Conrad is a partner in White and Williams LLP's Lehigh Valley, Pa., office and chairwoman of the firm's labor & employment and education law groups. She represents businesses, educational institutions and nonprofit organizations in all aspects of employment law.

For more than 20 years, Conrad has defended various employment actions, including the defense of federal and state discrimination claims, wrongful discharge claims, whistleblower claims and restrictive covenant cases. She has obtained a dismissal of a gender-based discrimination claim brought under the Equal Rights Amendment of the Pennsylvania Constitution in federal court. She has also obtained a trial verdict for a health care network in a breach of contract claim brought by a physician.

Conrad is the vice-chairwoman of the Pennsylvania Bar Association's Federal Practice Committee, a member of the executive committee of the PBA Commission for Women in the Profession and the Labor and Employment Council.

### **Q: How did you become a rainmaker?**

A: While everyone else tells me I'm a rainmaker, I do not particularly define myself in that role.

In comparison to other rainmakers, my career journey has distinguished me in the practice of law. I received an undergraduate degree in psychology with a certification in elementary education and spent seven years as a teacher, school counselor and president of a teachers' association. As president of the teachers' association, I worked with the attorneys that represented the teachers and the attorneys for the school district in personnel-related matters. I found myself drawn to that area of the law and decided to pursue a legal career with the intent to relate my existing passion for education and my newly developed interest in the law.

This unique path to becoming an attorney is not the only aspect that sets me apart from other attorneys; the basis of my process in developing clients is also unique. I believe a client relationship goes beyond the professional work product to a personal connection. Most attorneys are capable of doing good work and we all understand the importance of being available to clients. My practice has

developed from the personal connection that I establish with my clients; connections that result in clients knowing that I have their back.

I develop relationships by focusing on my client's sound achievements while at the same time effectively managing areas of concern. My goal is to develop a working and trusting relationship in which my client is an integral member of the defense team. In an employment claim, for example, I rely upon the human resources executive to obtain critical information, to assist in the development of key facts, and to provide insight and input to the defense strategy. This client connection and relationship is a key component of my litigation plan and my business development plan.

**Q: How do you stay a rainmaker?**

A: The standard answer is to produce quality work and be accessible to your clients. For me, it circles back to the personal connection. For example, I was recently at a Bar Association event and I was acknowledged for a Woman of Influence award that I had received. During the event, I was asked to say a few words and I seized the moment.

I decided rather than focusing on myself, I highlighted inspiration that I received from other effective leaders. After thanking the association, my firm and the roomful of attorneys, I related a recent experience I had meeting a woman of much greater influence, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. She had made an impact on me and the other 300 women legal and business leaders at a recent event my firm hosted. Justice O'Connor's message encouraged women to work even harder to achieve success and to take a part in making the country a better place. She emphasized her personal, post-retirement goal — to ensure that all students become engaged citizens through her civics education program. I utilized this moment to recognize her achievements and share her inspirational thoughts that touched me with the attendees at the Bar Association event.

Unplanned moments like this one naturally show my passion for excellence. Without planning it, I provided the audience a sense of the enthusiasm that I apply to life and work. That evening, I was stopped several times by attendees who conveyed their recognition of my achievements and my commitment to the practice of law. This connection is the framework I use to build and develop new client relationships.

**Q: What advice would you give to an aspiring rainmaker?**

A: Be true to yourself and continue to engage in activities that you enjoy, as it might assist in your professional endeavors as well. A few years ago, I joined the Board of the Women's 5K Classic, the largest all female 5K in Pennsylvania. The W5K raises funds for breast cancer research and women's fitness. As a leader in the organization and a breast cancer survivor, I wanted to run the 5K. To train for the run, I joined a women's running program and began to run with a diverse group of women several times a week. After successfully completing the 5K, we continued to meet and, over time, we became friends. During our mid-run conversations, we learned about each other's personal and professional lives.

Based on our running (and conversations), one of the women asked if I would meet with her good friend, a CFO at a local college, who wasn't satisfied with their current counsel. This referral from my personal connection led to a productive meeting with the CFO and I was retained by the college. Today, that college is one of my largest clients. This example shows that you never know where you might acquire new business; it might occur outside of a calculated business plan.

**Q: Tell us a tale of landing a big client.**

A: I was approached by the president of a university to review a litigation plan on a major case that was being handled by another law firm. This request presented an opportunity for business development, but placed me in an awkward position. Since there isn't one right way to defend a lawsuit, I requested the opportunity to submit and present my own litigation plan. The university agreed with my proposed plan and I was selected to represent the school in that matter.

After obtaining summary judgment in the case, the matter was appealed to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. On appeal, I had the distinct privilege of arguing the case before a panel that included Judge Samuel Alito. The argument, which was also attended by my new client, remains a highlight of my career. I not only secured a new client with this case, it also helped me identify a target niche; representing colleges and universities in tenure-related disputes.

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