

Anna Erickson White

BEFORE LAW SCHOOL, I SERVED AS A PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER IN CAMEROON. The experience taught me an important life lesson about the value of understanding different perspectives. Even if we share the same language and purpose, we may not share the same worldview. Trying to understand from what perspective another person approaches a situation has helped me communicate better, and it makes me a better advocate.

In our professional lives, we should always be open to learning from others and willing to try approaches different than our own. As a young lawyer, I was mentored by two partners who had different styles and ways of practicing law. Working with them allowed me to find my own style. Colleagues tell me that I'm direct in my communications,

but I'm also fair and respectful. Fairness requires that we remain open to different viewpoints, which is something I encourage in younger lawyers.

Over the years

HEADQUARTERS:

San Francisco, California

WEBSITE: www.mofo.com

BUSINESS: Law firm

EMPLOYEES: 2,253

TITLE: Managing Partner

EDUCATION: BA, University of California, Berkeley; JD, Stanford University

FIRST JOB:

In high school, I had different part-time jobs. Before law school, I worked as a paralegal at a community law center and was a volunteer in the Peace Corps.

WHAT I'M READING: *Exodus*, by Leon Uris and *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, by Daniel Pink. My older daughter is a voracious reader and now recommends books for me to read. I'm always trailing behind her.

I've found that the practice of law is like a marathon, not a sprint. I advise associates starting with our firm to take the long view. What you do now can significantly affect you later in terms of your reputation, professional relationships, and the support you receive from others. Treating people with respect and kindness will help you be more persuasive, establish rapport, and build stronger connections—all of which are essential to building a successful legal career.

The legal profession has dramatically changed since I started practicing. Law firms have become more competitive, and big firms are becoming more and more like big businesses. The industry has also become increasingly global.

Part of what interests me about my role as a managing partner is how our firm can address these challenges while maintaining the values that define us as an institution. There's always been an emphasis on quality and client service at MoFo, which for us is just as important as teamwork. My father was a lawyer and was fortunate enough to work with his best friends. I've been equally as fortunate, as I have had the chance to work with—and learn from—my closest friends. For me, that has made all the difference.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO SUCCEED AND STAY COMPETITIVE IN YOUR POSITION/FIELD? Being a managing partner and doing complex litigation both require a number of skills, including problem solving, writing, interpersonal communication, creativity, and oral advocacy. They also require teamwork and the ability to see the bigger picture. I enjoy using all of these skills to help obtain the best results possible for my clients and the firm.

IS THERE A ROLE MODEL WHO HAS HAD A PROFOUND IMPACT ON YOUR CAREER AND/OR LIFE? WHAT DID HE/SHE MOTIVATE YOU TO DO? I have had different role models at different points in my careers. A.C. Johnston (who has held various positions throughout the firm) and Stan Doten (who has retired from the firm) had a lasting impact on me as a young associate. They had different styles and approaches as lawyers, but they shared with and instilled in me the value of hard work and treating everyone with respect.

