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2017 PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

DISTINGUISHED LEADERS

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PRINCIPAL, MCKOOL SMITH, DALLAS

TL: Distinguished Leaders in many cases have praiseworthy careers, but most importantly they continue to be leaders in the profession. What are some of your proudest recent achievements?

DC: Watching young lawyers grow as trial lawyers. I've tried a lot of cases, including many where I did everything myself. In recent years I've given younger lawyers opportunities to handle significant tasks at trial: cross-examinations, closing arguments and other important matters. It's inspiring to watch the next generation of trial lawyers stepping up into positions of responsibility, and I'm proud to have shared that experience with them.

TL: What does it mean to be a leader? Leading by example? Being active in professional and community organizations? Professional successes?

DC: In complex litigation being a leader means building consensus among the client and the legal team. This frequently involves not only lawyers in my firm but co-counsel in other firms. We are constantly faced with difficult and novel issues, and it's essential that someone chart a path to a common goal and help everyone get there.

TL: How are the business and profession of law changing, and is the Texas bar well-positioned for the future?

DC: The legal profession serves society, and we all know that society is reinventing itself at an unprecedented pace. Email, electronic document transfer, social media and massive data storage have all revolutionized the legal profession. Lawyers are struggling to catch up with their clients and to balance our historical legal system with the needs of today.

TL: How can the bench and bar most effectively hold their members accountable to clients and the public?

DC: One of the most admirable traditions of the legal profession is that it's self-policing. The public, including most of our clients, struggle to understand what lawyers actually do



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and why. It's essential that lawyers and the judiciary maintain high standards of ethical conduct.

TL: What is the best advice for someone considering a career in law, or someone already in the profession who is seeking to make a greater impact?

DC: As a participant in the legal system, remember that you are helping to shape it. Every day you will be faced with decisions that give you opportunities to make the system more fair, economical, just, collegial and efficient. Or the opposite. When you make those daily decisions, strive to build the kind of system you want to live with. ■