

## **Traits Important for Success in the Business Law Practice**

**by Charles E. McCallum**

Some traits are important for success in all varieties of lawyering. The most important are:

1. a genuine desire to help people, and a commitment to serve others before self, founded in a caring personality;
2. empathy, i.e., the ability and instinctual habit to put yourself in others' shoes and see things through their eyes;
3. multitasking ability, i.e., the ability to move quickly and seamlessly, without stress, between many different projects involving many different people and issues;
4. intelligence and in addition mental quickness - most successful lawyers are intuitive problem solvers, i.e., they seem intuitively (subconsciously?) to see the answers even before they see the logical thinking path that gets them to those answers
5. a lively intellectual curiosity and lifelong dedication to learning;
6. excellent verbal skills, both in comprehension and in expression;
7. good listening skills - which usually result from having empathy and intellectual curiosity, coupled with dedication to helping others;
8. high personal integrity - with deep commitment to honesty, loyalty, candor, transparency, and respect for others;
9. a passion for excellence; and
10. sufficient humility to admit to oneself that there are things you do not know, coupled with sufficient self-confidence to permit that admission to be made to others.

For success in the practice of business law it is in addition important to have:

11. a passion and eye for detail;
12. comfort working with numbers (i.e., no math fear);
13. an intellectual curiosity that extends to the business/financial/technological context in which transactional lawyers work;
14. a flexible, innovative mind that facilitates pursuit of compromise and creative problem solving without the complications of pride of authorship and resistance to change; and
15. in the current global economy, a high degree of cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness, to facilitate transactional counseling, planning, and deal-making involving transnational factors.