

## DISTINGUISHED LEADERS



### Joseph Shenker

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**Chairman, Sullivan & Cromwell**

**What are some of your proudest recent achievements?**

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eing a “link in the chain” of leaders of Sullivan & Cromwell.

Our history stretches back over nearly a century and a half, our lawyers are among the best in the world, our clients among the

most respected and the matters on which they call upon us for advice among the most interesting and important. It has been, and continues to be, an incredible privilege to help lead this institution.

**What does it mean to be a leader? First and foremost, to lead by example.** Our firm chairs have historically continued as active practitioners of the quality we want each lawyer at the firm to aspire to and achieve. Second, to put the interest of the firm as a whole ahead of any personal interest or agenda: one cannot have “buy-in” to one’s leadership and decision-making unless it is done in the best interest of the organization. Third, to keep an open mind and listen to divergent points of view and concerns, but then take action in the time frame that is most effective.

**Name a lawyer or mentor whose leadership inspired you. I have learned much from each of my predecessors with whom I worked.** John Merow was incredibly efficient and had an unerring ability to cut quickly to the heart of the matter with terrific business sense. Ricardo Mestres was one of the fairest and personal-agenda-less people I have ever met. Rodge Cohen’s work ethic and devotion to his clients and the firm is nonpareil. Each of these leaders are obviously incredibly intellectually gifted, but that is something they cannot teach you; the other qualities can be taught.

**How are the business and profession of law changing, and how should lawyers adapt for the future? Throughout my career there has always**

**been more talk of the business and profession changing** than it actually has, but I do believe the pace of change will pick up – largely as a result of ever increasing globalization, plus technological change and advances, on the part of our clients. The result I think is we will see more rapid bifurcation of providers of legal services into two groups. The first will consist of non-law firm legal service providers—ranging from online platforms and machine intelligence, to consulting firms, less expensive off shore providers and accounting firms—plus “mega-law firms” who aim to provide whatever legal service is required in whatever jurisdiction the client operates.

The second group will be smaller and will I think consist of “boutique” or “specialty” firms of various sizes—including large ones—that focus on particular types of legal work, practice areas and/or jurisdictions. They too will be far more technologically advanced than today, but the lawyers in those firms to be successful

will, I think, need to be nimble among practice areas, have broad areas of knowledge, and essentially serve as industry-based or client-based advisers on a whole range of legal topics, obviously with specialized knowledge on some topics and the ability to call upon others within their firm for specialized knowledge they lack.

**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? The broader your knowledge, within law and outside of it—whether economics, business, psychology, languages, knowledge of different cultures, etc.—the better; within the law, never “tune-out” when the specialist in an area you are less familiar with is speaking. Instead, seek to understand every aspect of a matter you are working on. And always remember the law is a noble profession: without a system or society based on laws none of us will prosper or fulfill our potential.**