

Top Lawyers: Jessica Kopas of Haber Law On The 5 Things You Need To Become A Top Lawyer In Your Specific Field of Law

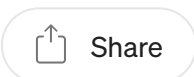
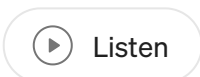
An Interview With Doug Noll



Doug Noll · [Follow](#)

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Dedication to hard work: Recognize that long hours and hard work are inherent to the litigation profession. Preparation and putting in the necessary time are key components of achieving success. At the same time, integrating personal time is important also. I rarely miss a day of Pilates or a spin class. Staying fit helps me perform at an optimal level.

The legal field is known to be extremely competitive. Lawyers are often smart, ambitious, and highly educated. That being said, what does it take to stand out and become a “Top Lawyer” in your specific field of law? In this interview series called “5 Things You Need To Become A Top Lawyer In Your Specific Field of Law”, we are talking to top lawyers who share what it takes to excel and stand out in your industry.

As a part of this interview series, I had the pleasure of interviewing Jessica Kopas.

Jessica Kopas is a partner at Haber Law with expertise in commercial litigation, including complex business litigation. Ms. Kopas has litigated several high-profile cases involving a nationally publicized billion-dollar South Florida Ponzi scheme centered around falsified structured settlements as well as various cases involving bank fraud against financial institutions. Additionally, she has extensive experience, including several trials, in the areas of business torts, business fraud, breach of fiduciary duty litigation, probate litigation, and bankruptcy and creditors’ rights.

Over the course of her practice, Ms. Kopas has advocated for the interests of her clients, including Fortune 500 companies, in a wide variety of disputes both in and out of court. She has appeared before state, federal district and federal bankruptcy courts in Florida and other jurisdictions. She also has participated in mediations and other forms of alternative dispute resolution, including accomplishing complex settlement agreements as alternatives to trial.

<https://www.haber.law/jessica-l-kopas/>

Thank you so much for joining us in this interview series. Before we dig in, our readers would love to get to know you a bit more. What is the “backstory” that brought you to this particular career path in law? Did you want to be an attorney “when you grew up”?

With a family background rooted in the legal profession, I was naturally drawn to pursuing a career in law. Inspired by the footsteps of my grandfather and father, both attorneys in New York, I embarked on a journey that led me to Florida for law school. It was during this time, that I secured my first position in the field of litigation, an area of law that captured my interest.

Can you tell us a bit about the nature of your practice and what you focus on?

As a seasoned business litigator, my expertise lies primarily in complex commercial business litigation. For 14 years, I honed my skills at a firm located in Broward County, focusing primarily on representing plaintiffs in legal disputes against financial institutions.

Since joining my current firm, Haber Law, I have broadened the scope of my practice to encompass more general complex business litigation, involving both plaintiff and defense work.

You are a successful attorney. Which three character traits do you think were most instrumental to your success? What unique qualities do you have that others may not? Can you please share a story or example for each?

Three fundamental character traits that have contributed to my achievements throughout my career are persistence, diligence, and attention to detail.

1. Persistence has served as the cornerstone of my professional journey, emphasizing the importance of commitment and continuous preparation to present the most persuasive position.
2. Diligence requires following up on tasks and responsibilities. That approach allows me to cultivate an environment of reliability and accountability.
3. My unwavering attention to detail is a crucial attribute. I have a strong commitment to zealously representing my clients and keeping them well informed about the progress of their cases.

Do you think you have had luck in your success? Can you explain what you mean?

While I attribute my success to hard work and dedication rather than luck, I must acknowledge the fortunate encounters I've had with exceptional mentors throughout my career. Their guidance and support have undoubtedly played a significant role in shaping my professional growth.

Do you think where you went to school has any bearing on your success? How important is it for a lawyer to go to a top-tier school?

The training I received at Nova Southeastern University School of Law (NSU), known

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respect I've earned through my performance in the courtroom. Real life experience is the truest way of learning the business of law. Law is a practice and the more you do it the better you become at it. For me, the real key to success has been the guidance I've received from many mentors along the way.

Based on the lessons you have learned from your experience, if you could go back in time and speak to your 20-year-old self, what would you say? Would you do anything differently?

If I had the opportunity to advise my 20-year-old self, I would emphasize the importance of embracing the present moment in an effort to alleviate unnecessary anxiety. Being present can be as easy as remembering to slow down and breathe. I also would tell my 20-year-old self to work on interpersonal skills, such as taking the time to listen to others and fully understand where they are in their professional and personal lives. Learning how to integrate all of the various parts of our lives is key to strong mental health and effectiveness.

I know now how important it is to have strong interpersonal skills blended with keen legal expertise. I firmly believe that every experience I have encountered has been instrumental in shaping my character and leading me to where I am today. I have no regrets.

This is not easy work. What is your primary motivation and drive behind the work that you do?

The detailed and intense work involved in preparing for large hearings, depositions or trials is exciting to me. I'm also highly motivated to deliver successful results for my clients. I also enjoy the teamwork needed to achieve success in trials or hearings. Working with others and ensuring client satisfaction motivates me and drives me to achieve even more for my clients.

What are some of the most interesting or exciting projects you are working on now?

Currently, I am handling several cases involving irrevocable trust and estate planning. This area has always been a passion of mine because of the intricacy and fact-finding skills required. I also work extensively with condominium associations and see first-hand how important it is for these organizations to have strong advocates to represent them during difficult and complex situations. Such representation helps protect the associations and bring peace of mind to all of the residents.

Where do you go from here? Where do you aim to be in the next chapter of your career?

The supportive mentorship I have received at Haber Law has been truly invaluable, and I aspire to continue growing alongside these exceptional professionals as I

advance in my career. My ultimate goal is to help the firm expand into other areas of South Florida, including Broward County and beyond.

Without sharing anything confidential, can you please share your most successful “war story”? Can you share the funniest?

One of my most successful experiences was a six-week jury trial in western North Carolina. It was a unique and challenging experience, as it involved trying a case in a different jurisdiction with its own local rules and culture. This trial taught me valuable lessons in effective communication and handling stress. Working for such a long period of time away from home, balancing many witnesses and operating in a new environment required tremendous focus and determination and the ability to create a new routine for working and remaining healthy and strong.

Ok, fantastic. Let’s now shift to discussing some advice for aspiring lawyers. Do you work remotely? Onsite? Or Hybrid? What do you think will be the future of how law offices operate? What do you prefer? Can you please explain what you mean?

Drawing from my personal experience as a hybrid lawyer, I have the privilege of working both in a traditional office setting and remotely. This arrangement enables me to benefit from the collaborative environment and face-to-face interactions in the office, while also allowing me to have a quieter workspace to dedicate focused time to case strategy, preparation, research, and writing.

In litigation, it is beneficial to work collaboratively, so being in the office is profoundly helpful. However, when you need to focus and perform your tasks, you may find it helpful to have a quieter, remote space. It is necessary to have a balance of both when you are in this area of law. Haber Law offers its team a sophisticated, high-tech system that allows us to reserve office and conference space in advance. No one has a dedicated office in the traditional sense with diplomas and photos on the wall. This approach is simple, modern, and extremely efficient.

In my opinion, the future of law is hybrid work. It is financially beneficial for law firms, and lawyers enjoy the benefits of more effectively integrating our business and personal lives.

How has the legal world changed since COVID? How do you think it might change in the near future? Can you explain what you mean?

Since COVID, judges and lawyers have seen the benefits of Zoom hearings, depositions, mediations, and general remote work. This virtual technology saves assets and resources for clients, as well as provides lawyers with more time overall.

In the past, I traveled often for work and a lot of my time was spent at the airport. However, I am grateful that my current situation allows for more flexibility.

Based on your experience, how can attorneys effectively leverage social media to build their practice?

Attorneys can effectively leverage social media by showcasing their community involvement and sharing positive outcomes they have achieved for their clients.



Excellent. Here is the main question of our interview. “What are Five Tips for Becoming a Top Lawyer In Your Specific Area of Practice?” Please share a story or an example for each.

1. **Practical analysis:** Embrace on-the-job training and experience that goes beyond what is taught in law school. Adaptability and a willingness to learn are crucial.
2. **Effective calendar management:** Take full responsibility for your cases by maintaining a well-organized calendar. Missing deadlines can have severe consequences, so staying on top of your schedule is essential.
3. **Dedication to hard work:** Recognize that long hours and hard work are inherent to the litigation profession. Preparation and putting in the necessary time are key

components of achieving success. At the same time, integrating personal time is important also. I rarely miss a day of Pilates or a spin class. Staying fit helps me perform at an optimal level.

4. **Maintaining focus:** Sustaining mental focus is essential in a profession that demands meticulous attention to detail. Losing focus can hinder your ability to fulfill your responsibilities effectively. Sometimes, a sharper focus requires pausing. For example, I never respond to a text message or email immediately. I wait until I can properly focus and respond thoughtfully.
5. **Strong interpersonal skills:** Building strong relationships with clients and colleagues is vital. Creating an atmosphere of appreciation, open communication, and comfort fosters trust and enhances your effectiveness as an attorney.

We are very blessed that some of the biggest names in Business, VC funding, Sports, and Entertainment read this column. Is there a person in the world, or in the US with whom you would love to have a private breakfast or lunch, and why? He or she might see this. :-)

My clients and my colleagues are my heroes; therefore, time with them is my ultimate reward.

Thank you for these fantastic insights. We greatly appreciate the time you spent on this.

A *bout the Interviewer: Douglas E. Noll, JD, MA was born nearly blind, crippled with club feet, partially deaf, and left-handed. He overcame all of these obstacles to become a successful civil trial lawyer. In 2000, he abandoned his law practice to become a peacemaker. His calling is to serve humanity, and he executes his calling at many levels. He is an award-winning author, teacher, and trainer. He is a highly experienced mediator. Doug's work carries him from international work to helping people resolve deep interpersonal and ideological conflicts. Doug teaches his innovative de-escalation skill that calms any angry person in 90 seconds or less. With Laurel Kaufer, Doug founded Prison of Peace in 2009. The*

Prison of Peace project trains life and long terms incarcerated people to be powerful peacemakers and mediators. He has been deeply moved by inmates who have learned and applied deep, empathic listening skills, leadership skills, and problem-solving skills to reduce violence in their prison communities. Their dedication to learning, improving, and serving their communities motivates him to expand the principles of Prison of Peace so that every human wanting to learn the skills of peace may do so. Doug's awards include California Lawyer Magazine Lawyer of the Year, Best Lawyers in America Lawyer of the Year, Purpose Prize Fellow, International Academy of Mediators Syd Leezak Award of Excellence, National Academy of Distinguished Neutrals Neutral of the Year. His four books have won a number of awards and commendations. Doug's podcast, Listen With Leaders, is now accepting guests. Click on [this link](#) to learn more and apply.

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