



BENEFITS OF THE ACTIVE MIND

Leonardo da Vinci once said that “learning never exhausts the mind.” That quote has been like a beacon my entire life. I’ve always thought that one could learn something from almost any experience. My first knowledge of classical music came from Bugs Bunny (Spear and magic helmet?). I also have treasured all the knowledge I have gained over my first decades. You never know when learning will be put to use.

My first steps as an attorney were with an insurance defense firm. I found out quickly that I was ignorant about how cases were tried. Sure, I knew how the law functioned in theory, but a deposition? How do you take one? I spent years watching, getting coached and having someone watch over my shoulder as I started preparing cases for trial on my own. After six years I became a partner and, not to put too good a spin, I became a trial lawyer respected by my opponents and lauded by my clients. I could not have been more content.

I’ve never been one to just sit still, though, so after a few years of enjoying the fruits of my legal career, I left the joys of partnership behind to serve my country as a diplomat. What would my experience as a lawyer do for me at an Embassy? Surprisingly, quite a bit. Preparing for an audit by the Office of the Inspector General (think colonoscopy every four years, only without the pleasantries) was not so hard when I broke it down like a case being prepped for trial. What were past mistakes? What have we (or other Missions across the globe) been doing well? How could we give ourselves the best chance for a successful outcome?

Needless to say, the results of breaking down component parts and analyzing them (to death?) were noteworthy. That said, even though I ostensibly led the team’s preparations, the lion’s share of the success was due to the effort of our team of hard-working Indian employees. I was posted in Chennai at the time and learned to navigate cultural and linguistic (What the heck is “prepone?” Why the opposite of “postpone” of course) differences to work hand in glove with my colleagues from the subcontinent. After I left India in 2010, I was certain I would put that knowledge to use again, save for a future tourist trip.

Ah, but flash forward just two short years, following my retirement from the Foreign Service. Would I like to work for Cobra Legal Solutions, an up-and-coming legal services company? You bet? I had no way to predict that I could utilize knowledge of contracts, discovery, trying cases and working with large teams of Indian professionals so symbiotically. Here we are nearly 7 years later, and I am blessed to be part of the best legal services team on the planet. And, again, the lion’s share of success still is due to a group of hugely talented, industrious Indian attorneys who ALWAYS put the client’s needs first. I’m just happy to be a part of that well-oiled machine and to have the opportunity to learn something new virtually every day. To paraphrase Leonardo, my mind is never exhausted by that experience.

Sincerely,

The Law (aka: Will Webb)