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Skills Required by Great Lawyers

A great lawyer needs all of the following skills:

Integrity

Faithfulness and devotion to the client

Motivation to work hard and diligently for the client;

The capacity to master all of the required skills (technical as well as people skills: IQ and EQ, both)

An understanding of the client's goals;

“Engagement,” as defined by management texts (high levels of effort, persistence at difficult tasks, the desire to help others, the willingness to go beyond the norms or expectations, voicing recommendations for improvement, expanding one's role as the situation warrants, and adapting to and facilitating change)

“Love” for the job and the people—*see, How Measurements Fail Doctors and Teachers*, NY Times, Dec. 17, 2016 (*quoting* Prof. Avedis Donabedian, developer of the Donabedian's triad to measure quality, who summarized it shortly before his death in the simple formula, “The secret of quality is love.”)

Strategic planning

The ability to see which strategies will achieve the client's goals;

Interview skills

Empathy

Ability to hear nuance and realize when there's more to the story

Investigative skills to draw out relevant material

Puzzle-solver skills—the ability to recognize, search for, and find, facts that will allow the development of an entire new argument;

Legal Research skills

Ability to find, read and understand the relevant cases

Ability to see the implication of cases that don't, on their face, appear to be relevant

Ability to apply the law to the facts of the case

Emotional, psychological & empathic intelligence

- The ability to see which arguments will feel powerful to the fact finder
- The ability to recognize and develop the justness in a client's cause
- The ability to describe the justness in a client's cause
- The ability to deal with [the inevitable] setbacks and frustrations without allowing it to break your stride
- The ability to recognize what tales are inconsistent with human behavior
- The ability to recognize and see the motivations of the different actors in every lawsuit;
- Ability to craft a legal argument that's consistent with the client's personality and affect;

Legal Writing & Language Skills

- The ability to present the facts in a compelling manner, in a way that paints colorful images in the minds of the readers
- The ability to craft an argument in a compelling manner
- The ability to bring precedent to bear to make a compelling argument
- The ability to write cleanly and persuasively

Negotiation Skills

- The ability to convert adversarial, tense situations into mutually cooperative ones
- The ability to reduce ill-will and tensions
- The ability to make people feel heard
- The ability to understand others, and empathize with conflicting positions and beliefs;
- The ability to think outside the box and craft resolutions that allow everybody to win;
- The ability to suppress one's own emotional needs for the benefit of the client;

Preparation Skills

- The ability, patience and dedication to prepare a case for presentation in court
- Choreographic skills – the ability to prepare the examination of your witnesses by envisioning what their testimony will be like and how you will devastate opposing witnesses;

Witness preparation skills

- Psychological aspects of witness preparation
- Ability to restore a client's self-dignity and respect

Presentation Skills

- The ability to cleanly, persuasively and compellingly present your client's position to the tribunal

Trial Skills

Technical knowlege

- Rules of Evidence
- Rules of Procedure
- The law relating to the actual cause of action
- Courtroom decorum
- The psychological aspects of the courtroom and relationship among all of its participants, the judge, witness, parties and the law;

Theatrical skills

- The art of presentation

Opening statement skills

- A combination of law, facts, drama and presentation

Direct examination skills

- Drawing out a compelling narrative in the proper manner
- Setting a witness at ease
- Being in synchronicity with your witness
- Ensuring all the required elements are satisfied

Cross-examination skills

- The ability to draft a powerful, efficient, dramatically destructive cross;
- Knowing when not to examine an adverse witness;
- Knowing how to effectively plan a cross examination;
- Knowledge of advanced cross-examination techniques:

- Maintaining control of a hostile witness
- Eliciting admissions from a determined witness
- Dealing with the “wise aleck” witness
- Punishing the deceptive witness
- Knowing the eight steps of impeachment by prior inconsistent statements
- Knowing advanced impeachment techniques
- Knowing the 19 ways to control a “run away” witness
- Knowing the advanced techniques of persuasion
- Knowing how to bait the hostile witness
- Knowing how to deal with the witness who claims to no longer remember
- Knowing how to use voice, movement, body language, timing and silences to maximize the effect of a powerful cross examination

Closing statement skills

- Drafting clean orders and judgments to avoid further controversy