

NICE LAWYERS FINISH FIRST

Acquiring the Seven Virtues of Good Lawyering

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Sean Carter is the founder of *Lawpsided Seminars*, a company devoted to solid legal continuing education with a healthy dose of laughter.

Mr. Carter graduated from Harvard Law School in 1992. His ten years of legal practice focused on corporate securities and mergers and acquisitions. During this time, he represented such clients as GNC, Experian, The Boston Beer Company, Homeside Lending, Safelite Auto Glass, J. Crew and many others, before eventually serving as in-house counsel to a publicly-traded finance company.

In 2002, Mr. Carter left the practice of law to pursue a career as the country's foremost Humorist at Law. Since then, Mr. Carter has crisscrossed the country delivering his Lawpsided Seminars for state and local bar associations, law firms, in-house corporate legal departments and law schools. Each year, he presents more than 100 humorous programs on such topics as legal ethics, stress management, constitutional law, legal marketing and much more.

Mr. Carter is the author of the first-ever comedic legal treatise -- *If It Does Not Fit, Must You Acquit?: Your Humorous Guide to the Law*. His syndicated legal humor column has appeared in general circulation newspapers in more than 30 states and his weekly humor column for lawyers appeared in the *ABA e-Report* from 2003 to 2006.

Finally, Sean lives in Mesa, Arizona with his wife and four sons.

Utah Standards of Professionalism and Civility

To enhance the daily experience of lawyers and the reputation of the Bar as a whole, the Utah Supreme Court, by order dated October 16, 2003, approved the following Standards of Professionalism and Civility as recommended by its Advisory Committee on Professionalism.

Preamble

A lawyer's conduct should be characterized at all times by personal courtesy and professional integrity in the fullest sense of those terms. In fulfilling a duty to represent a client vigorously as lawyers, we must be mindful of our obligations to the administration of justice, which is a truth-seeking process designed to resolve human and societal problems in a rational, peaceful, and efficient manner. We must remain committed to the rule of law as the foundation for a just and peaceful society.

Conduct that may be characterized as uncivil, abrasive, abusive, hostile, or obstructive impedes the fundamental goal of resolving disputes rationally, peacefully, and efficiently. Such conduct tends to delay and often to deny justice.

Lawyers should exhibit courtesy, candor and cooperation in dealing with the public and participating in the legal system. The following standards are designed to encourage lawyers to meet their obligations to each other, to litigants and to the system of justice, and thereby achieve the twin goals of civility and professionalism, both of which are hallmarks of a learned profession dedicated to public service.

We expect judges and lawyers will make mutual and firm commitments to these standards. Adherence is expected as part of a commitment by all participants to improve the administration of justice throughout this State. We further expect lawyers to educate their clients regarding these standards and judges to reinforce this whenever clients are present in the courtroom by making it clear that such tactics may hurt the client's case.

Although for ease of usage the term "court" is used throughout, these standards should be followed by all judges and lawyers in all interactions with each other and in any proceedings in this State. Copies may be made available to clients to reinforce our obligation to maintain and foster these standards. Nothing in these standards supersedes or detracts from existing disciplinary codes or standards of conduct.

1. Lawyers shall advance the legitimate interests of their clients, without reflecting any ill-will that clients may have for their adversaries, even if called upon to do so by another. Instead, lawyers shall treat all other counsel, parties, judges, witnesses, and other participants in all proceedings in a courteous and dignified manner.

2. Lawyers shall advise their clients that civility, courtesy, and fair dealing are expected. They are tools for effective advocacy and not signs of weakness. Clients have no right to demand that lawyers abuse anyone or engage in any offensive or improper conduct.
3. Lawyers shall not, without an adequate factual basis, attribute to other counsel or the court improper motives, purpose, or conduct. Lawyers should avoid hostile, demeaning, or humiliating words in written and oral communications with adversaries. Neither written submissions nor oral presentations should disparage the integrity, intelligence, morals, ethics, or personal behavior of an adversary unless such matters are directly relevant under controlling substantive law.
4. Lawyers shall never knowingly attribute to other counsel a position or claim that counsel has not taken or seek to create such an unjustified inference or otherwise seek to create a “record” that has not occurred.
5. Lawyers shall not lightly seek sanctions and will never seek sanctions against or disqualification of another lawyer for any improper purpose.
6. Lawyers shall adhere to their express promises and agreements, oral or written, and to all commitments reasonably implied by the circumstances or by local custom.
7. When committing oral understandings to writing, lawyers shall do so accurately and completely. They shall provide other counsel a copy for review, and never include substantive matters upon which there has been no agreement, without explicitly advising other counsel. As drafts are exchanged, lawyers shall bring to the attention of other counsel changes from prior drafts.
8. When permitted or required by court rule or otherwise, lawyers shall draft orders that accurately and completely reflect the court’s ruling. Lawyers shall promptly prepare and submit proposed orders to other counsel and attempt to reconcile any differences before the proposed orders and any objections are presented to the court.
9. Lawyers shall not hold out the potential of settlement for the purpose of foreclosing discovery, delaying trial, or obtaining other unfair advantage, and lawyers shall timely respond to any offer of settlement or inform opposing counsel that a response has not been authorized by the client.
10. Lawyers shall make good faith efforts to resolve by stipulation undisputed relevant matters, particularly when it is obvious such matters can be proven, unless there is a sound advocacy basis for not doing so.
11. Lawyers shall avoid impermissible ex parte communications.

12. Lawyers shall not send the court or its staff correspondence between counsel, unless such correspondence is relevant to an issue currently pending before the court and the proper evidentiary foundations are met or as such correspondence is specifically invited by the court.
13. Lawyers shall not knowingly file or serve motions, pleadings or other papers at a time calculated to unfairly limit other counsel's opportunity to respond or to take other unfair advantage of an opponent, or in a manner intended to take advantage of another lawyer's unavailability.
14. Lawyers shall advise their clients that they reserve the right to determine whether to grant accommodations to other counsel in all matters not directly affecting the merits of the cause or prejudicing the client's rights, such as extensions of time, continuances, adjournments, and admissions of facts. Lawyers shall agree to reasonable requests for extension of time and waiver of procedural formalities when doing so will not adversely affect their clients' legitimate rights. Lawyers shall never request an extension of time solely for the purpose of delay or to obtain a tactical advantage.
15. Lawyers shall endeavor to consult with other counsel so that depositions, hearings, and conferences are scheduled at mutually convenient times. Lawyers shall never request a scheduling change for tactical or unfair purpose. If a scheduling change becomes necessary, lawyers shall notify other counsel and the court immediately. If other counsel requires a scheduling change, lawyers shall cooperate in making any reasonable adjustments.
16. Lawyers shall not cause the entry of a default without first notifying other counsel whose identity is known, unless their clients' legitimate rights could be adversely affected.
17. Lawyers shall not use or oppose discovery for the purpose of harassment or to burden an opponent with increased litigation expense. Lawyers shall not object to discovery or inappropriately assert a privilege for the purpose of withholding or delaying the disclosure of relevant and non-protected information.
18. During depositions lawyers shall not attempt to obstruct the interrogator or object to questions unless reasonably intended to preserve an objection or protect a privilege for resolution by the court. "Speaking objections" designed to coach a witness are impermissible. During depositions or conferences, lawyers shall engage only in conduct that would be appropriate in the presence of a judge.
19. In responding to document requests and interrogatories, lawyers shall not interpret them in an artificially restrictive manner so as to avoid disclosure of relevant and non-protected documents or information, nor shall they produce documents in a manner designed to obscure their source, create confusion, or hide the existence of particular documents.

20. Lawyers shall not authorize or encourage their clients or anyone under their direction or supervision to engage in conduct proscribed by these Standards.

A Lawyer's Creed of Professionalism of the ABA Tort Trial & Insurance Practice Section

As a lawyer, I must strive to make our system of justice work fairly and efficiently. In order to carry out that responsibility, not only will I comply with the letter and spirit of the disciplinary standards applicable to all lawyers, but I will also conduct myself in accordance with the following Creed of Professionalism when dealing with my client, opposing parties, their counsel, the courts and the general public.

A. With respect to my client:

1. I will be loyal and committed to my client's cause, but I will not permit that loyalty and commitment to interfere with my ability to provide my client with objective and independent advice;
2. I will endeavor to achieve my client's lawful objectives in business transactions and in litigation as expeditiously and economically as possible;
3. In appropriate cases, I will counsel my client with respect to mediation, arbitration and other alternative methods of resolving disputes;
4. I will advise my client against pursuing litigation (or any other course of action) that is without merit and against insisting on tactics which are intended to delay resolution of the matter or to harass or drain the financial resources of the opposing party;
5. I will advise my client that civility and courtesy are not to be equated with weakness;
6. While I must abide by my client's decision concerning the objectives of the representation, I nevertheless will counsel my client that a willingness to initiate or engage in settlement discussions is consistent with zealous and effective representation.

B. With respect to opposing parties and their counsel:

1. I will endeavor to be courteous and civil, both in oral and in written communications;
2. I will not knowingly make statements of fact or of law that are untrue;
3. In litigation proceedings I will agree to reasonable requests for extensions of time or for waiver of procedural formalities when the legitimate interests of my client will not be adversely affected;

4. I will endeavor to consult with opposing counsel before scheduling depositions and meetings and before re-scheduling hearings, and I will cooperate with opposing counsel when scheduling changes are requested;
5. I will refrain from utilizing litigation or any other course of conduct to harass the opposing party;
6. I will refrain from engaging in excessive and abusive discovery, and I will comply with all reasonable discovery requests;
7. I will refrain from utilizing delaying tactics;
8. In depositions and other proceedings, and in negotiations, I will conduct myself with dignity, avoid making groundless objections and refrain from engaging in acts of rudeness or disrespect;
9. I will not serve motions and pleadings on the other party, or his counsel, at such a time or in such a manner as will unfairly limit the other party's opportunity to respond;
10. In business transactions I will not quarrel over matters of form or style, but will concentrate on matters of substance and content;
11. I will clearly identify, for other counsel or parties, all changes that I have made in documents submitted to me for review.

C. With respect to the courts and other tribunals:

1. I will be a vigorous and zealous advocate on behalf of my client, while recognizing, as an officer of the court, that excessive zeal may be detrimental to my client's interests as well as to the proper functioning of our system of justice;
2. Where consistent with my client's interests, I will communicate with opposing counsel in an effort to avoid litigation and to resolve litigation that has actually commenced;
3. I will voluntarily withdraw claims or defenses when it becomes apparent that they do not have merit or are superfluous;
4. I will refrain from filing frivolous motions;
5. I will make every effort to agree with other counsel, as early as possible, on a voluntary exchange of information and on a plan for discovery;

6. I will attempt to resolve, by agreement, my objections to matters contained in my opponent's pleadings and discovery requests;
7. When scheduled hearings or depositions have to be canceled, I will notify opposing counsel, and, if appropriate, the court (or other tribunal) as early as possible;
8. Before dates for hearings or trials are set -- or, if that is not feasible, immediately after such dates have been set -- I will attempt to verify the availability of key participants and witnesses so that I can promptly notify the court (or other tribunal) and opposing counsel of any likely problem in that regard;
9. In civil matters, I will stipulate to facts as to which there is no genuine dispute;
10. I will endeavor to be punctual in attending court hearings, conferences and depositions;
11. I will at all times be candid with the court.

D. With respect to the public and to our system of justice:

1. I will remember that, in addition to commitment to my client's cause, my responsibilities as a lawyer include a devotion to the public good;
2. I will endeavor to keep myself current in the areas in which I practice and, when necessary, will associate with, or refer my client to, counsel knowledgeable in another field of practice;
3. I will be mindful of the fact that, as a member of a self-regulating profession, it is incumbent on me to report violations by fellow lawyers of any disciplinary rule;
4. I will be mindful of the need to protect the image of the legal profession in the eyes of the public and will be so guided when considering methods and contents of advertising;
5. I will be mindful that the law is a learned profession and that among its desirable goals are devotion to public service, improvement of administration of justice, and the contribution of uncompensated time and civic influence on behalf of those persons who cannot afford adequate legal assistance.

Virtue #1

Chastity

Definition: “Abstaining from sexual conduct according to one’s state in life; the practice of courtly love and romantic friendship. Cleanliness through cultivated good health and hygiene, and maintained by refraining from intoxicants. *To be honest with oneself, one’s family, one’s friends, and to all of humanity. Embracing of moral wholesomeness and achieving purity of thought through education and betterment.* The ability to refrain from being distracted and influenced by hostility, temptation or corruption.”

Utah Standards of Professionalism and Civility

4. Lawyers shall never knowingly attribute to other counsel a position or claim that counsel has not taken or seek to create such an unjustified inference or otherwise seek to create a “record” that has not occurred.
6. Lawyers shall adhere to their express promises and agreements, oral or written, and to all commitments reasonably implied by the circumstances or by local custom.
7. When committing oral understandings to writing, lawyers shall do so accurately and completely. They shall provide other counsel a copy for review, and never include substantive matters upon which there has been no agreement, without explicitly advising other counsel. As drafts are exchanged, lawyers shall bring to the attention of other counsel changes from prior drafts.
8. When permitted or required by court rule or otherwise, lawyers shall draft orders that accurately and completely reflect the court’s ruling....
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A Lawyer’s Creed of Professionalism of the ABA Tort Trial & Insurance Practice Section

- B. With respect to opposing parties and their counsel:**

2. I will not knowingly make statements of fact or of law that are untrue;
 11. I will clearly identify, for other counsel or parties, all changes that I have made in documents submitted to me for review.
- C. With respect to the courts and other tribunals:**
11. I will at all times be candid with the court.
- D. With respect to the public and to our system of justice:**
3. I will be mindful of the fact that, as a member of a self-regulating profession, it is incumbent on me to report violations by fellow lawyers of any disciplinary rule;

Virtue #2

Temperance

Definition: “Restraint, temperance, justice. Constant mindfulness of others and one’s surroundings; *practicing self-control, abstention, moderation, zero-sum and deferred gratification. Prudence to judge between actions with regard to appropriate actions at a given time. Proper moderation between self-interest, versus public-interest, and against the rights and needs of others.*”

Utah Standards of Professionalism and Civility

1. ... [L]awyers shall treat all other counsel, parties, judges, witnesses, and other participants in all proceedings in a courteous and dignified manner.
3. ... Lawyers should avoid hostile, demeaning, or humiliating words in written and oral communications with adversaries. Neither written submissions nor oral presentations should disparage the integrity, intelligence, morals, ethics, or personal behavior of an adversary unless such matters are directly relevant under controlling substantive law.

A Lawyer’s Creed of Professionalism of the ABA Tort Trial & Insurance Practice Section

A. With respect to my client:

5. I will advise my client that civility and courtesy are not to be equated with weakness;

B. With respect to opposing parties and their counsel:

1. I will endeavor to be courteous and civil, both in oral and in written communications;
8. In depositions and other proceedings, and in negotiations, I will conduct myself with dignity, avoid making groundless objections and refrain from engaging in acts of rudeness or disrespect;

D. With respect to the public and to our system of justice:

4. I will be mindful of the need to protect the image of the legal profession in the eyes of the public and will be so guided when considering methods and contents of advertising;

Virtue #3

Charity

Definition: “Generosity, charity, self-sacrifice; the term should not be confused with the more restricted modern use of the word charity to mean benevolent giving.”

Utah Standards of Professionalism and Civility

3. Lawyers shall not, without an adequate factual basis, attribute to other counsel or the court improper motives, purpose, or conduct....
5. Lawyers shall not lightly seek sanctions and will never seek sanctions against or disqualification of another lawyer for any improper purpose.

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D. With respect to the public and to our system of justice:

1. I will remember that, in addition to commitment to my client’s cause, my responsibilities as a lawyer include a devotion to the public good;
5. I will be mindful that the law is a learned profession and that among its desirable goals are devotion to public service, improvement of administration of justice, and the contribution of uncompensated time and civic influence on behalf of those persons who cannot afford adequate legal assistance.

Virtue #4

Diligence

Definition: “A zealous and careful nature in one’s actions and work; decisive work ethic, steadfastness in belief, fortitude, and the capability of not giving up. Budgeting one’s time; monitoring one’s own activities to guard against laziness. *Upholding one’s convictions at all times, especially when no one else is watching (integrity).*”

A Lawyer’s Creed of Professionalism of the ABA Tort Trial & Insurance Practice Section

A. With respect to my client:

2. I will endeavor to achieve my client’s lawful objectives in business transactions and in litigation as expeditiously and economically as possible;

C. With respect to the courts and other tribunals:

10. I will endeavor to be punctual in attending court hearings, conferences and depositions;

D. With respect to the public and to our system of justice:

2. I will endeavor to keep myself current in the areas in which I practice and, when necessary, will associate with, or refer my client to, counsel knowledgeable in another field of practice;

Virtue #5

Patience

Definition: “Forbearance and endurance through moderation. Resolving conflicts and injustice peacefully. Creating a sense of peaceful stability and community, rather than engendering suffering, hostility and antagonism.”

Utah Standards of Professionalism and Civility

1. Lawyers shall advance the legitimate interests of their clients, without reflecting any ill-will that clients may have for their adversaries, even if called upon to do so by another....
10. Lawyers shall make good faith efforts to resolve by stipulation undisputed relevant matters, particularly when it is obvious such matters can be proven, unless there is a sound advocacy basis for not doing so.
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19. In responding to document requests and interrogatories, lawyers shall not interpret them in an artificially restrictive manner so as to avoid disclosure of relevant and non-protected documents or information, nor shall they produce documents in a manner designed to obscure their source, create confusion, or hide the existence of particular documents.

A Lawyer’s Creed of Professionalism of the ABA Tort Trial & Insurance Practice Section

A. With respect to my client:

3. In appropriate cases, I will counsel my client with respect to mediation, arbitration and other alternative methods of resolving disputes;

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6. While I must abide by my client's decision concerning the objectives of the representation, I nevertheless will counsel my client that a willingness to initiate or engage in settlement discussions is consistent with zealous and effective representation.

B. With respect to opposing parties and their counsel:

5. I will refrain from utilizing litigation or any other course of conduct to harass the opposing party;
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7. I will refrain from utilizing delaying tactics;
9. I will not serve motions and pleadings on the other party, or his counsel, at such a time or in such a manner as will unfairly limit the other party's opportunity to respond;

C. With respect to the courts and other tribunals:

2. Where consistent with my client's interests, I will communicate with opposing counsel in an effort to avoid litigation and to resolve litigation that has actually commenced;
3. I will voluntarily withdraw claims or defenses when it becomes apparent that they do not have merit or are superfluous;
4. I will refrain from filing frivolous motions;
5. I will make every effort to agree with other counsel, as early as possible, on a voluntary exchange of information and on a plan for discovery;
6. I will attempt to resolve, by agreement, my objections to matters contained in my opponent's pleadings and discovery requests;
8. Before dates for hearings or trials are set -- or, if that is not feasible, immediately after such dates have been set -- I will attempt to verify the availability of key participants and witnesses so that I can promptly notify the court (or other tribunal) and opposing counsel of any likely problem in that regard;

9. In civil matters, I will stipulate to facts as to which there is no genuine dispute;

Virtue #6

Kindness

Definition: “Charity, compassion and friendship for its own sake. Empathy and trust without prejudice or resentment. Unselfish love and voluntary kindness without bias or spite. Having positive outlooks and cheerful demeanor; to inspire kindness in others.”

Utah Standards of Professionalism and Civility

14. Lawyers shall advise their clients that they reserve the right to determine whether to grant accommodations to other counsel in all matters not directly affecting the merits of the cause or prejudicing the client’s rights, such as extensions of time, continuances, adjournments, and admissions of facts. Lawyers shall agree to reasonable requests for extension of time and waiver of procedural formalities when doing so will not adversely affect their clients’ legitimate rights. Lawyers shall never request an extension of time solely for the purpose of delay or to obtain a tactical advantage.
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B. With respect to opposing parties and their counsel:

3. In litigation proceedings I will agree to reasonable requests for extensions of time or for waiver of procedural formalities when the legitimate interests of my client will not be adversely affected;
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C. With respect to the courts and other tribunals:

7. When scheduled hearings or depositions have to be canceled, I will notify opposing counsel, and, if appropriate, the court (or other tribunal) as early as possible;
8. Before dates for hearings or trials are set -- or, if that is not feasible, immediately after such dates have been set -- I will attempt to verify the availability of key participants and witnesses so that I can promptly notify the court (or other tribunal) and opposing counsel of any likely problem in that regard;

Virtue #7

Humility

Definition: “Modest behavior, selflessness, and the giving of respect. *Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less.* It is a spirit of self-examination; a hermeneutic of suspicion toward yourself and charity toward people you disagree with. *The courage of the heart necessary to undertake tasks which are difficult, tedious or unglamorous,* and to graciously accept the sacrifices involved. Giving credit where credit is due; not unfairly glorifying one’s own self.”

Utah Standards of Professionalism and Civility

2. Lawyers shall advise their clients that civility, courtesy, and fair dealing are expected. They are tools for effective advocacy and not signs of weakness. Clients have no right to demand that lawyers abuse anyone or engage in any offensive or improper conduct.

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B. With respect to opposing parties and their counsel:

10. In business transactions I will not quarrel over matters of form or style, but will concentrate on matters of substance and content;

C. With respect to the courts and other tribunals:

1. I will be a vigorous and zealous advocate on behalf of my client, while recognizing, as an officer of the court, that excessive zeal may be detrimental to my client’s interests as well as to the proper functioning of our system of justice;

D. With respect to the public and to our system of justice:

1. I will remember that, in addition to commitment to my client's cause, my responsibilities as a lawyer include a devotion to the public good;

5. I will be mindful that the law is a learned profession and that among its desirable goals are devotion to public service, improvement of administration of justice, and the contribution of uncompensated time and civic influence on behalf of those persons who cannot afford adequate legal assistance.