

Rainmaker Q&A: Winston & Strawn's Jeffrey Kessler

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Jeffrey L. Kessler is a partner in Winston & Strawn LLP's New York office. He serves as the firm's Co-chairman, is Chairman of the firm's global Antitrust/Competition Practice, and Co-chairs the firm's Sports Law Practice.

Additionally, Kessler serves on the firm's executive committee. He focuses his practice on all aspects of antitrust/competition, sports law, intellectual property, complex litigation, and government criminal and civil investigations. He has been lead counsel in some of the most complex antitrust, sports law and intellectual property law cases in the country, including major jury trials, and has represented a number of U.S. and international companies in criminal and civil investigations in the antitrust, trade and Foreign Corrupt Practices Act areas.

Kessler is also one of the most prominent lawyers in the country regularly engaged in high-profile sports litigation. He has litigated some of the most famous sports-antitrust cases in history, including *McNeil v. the NFL*, the landmark antitrust jury trial which led to the establishment of free agency in the [National Football League](#), and *Brady v. NFL*, which led to the end of the 2011 NFL lockout.

Q: What skill was most important to you in becoming a rainmaker?

A: Treating the client's problems like they are my own personal problems and giving them the same thought and attention as I would a personal problem. This leads to a level of service, commitment and care that clients want and expect. It also leads to true friendships with clients that can form lasting bonds.

Q: How do you prepare a pitch for a potential new client?

A: Thoroughly study and understand the problem the client faces and discuss in the pitch how you would approach and solve that problem, if retained. My goal is to provide an action plan, not a pitch devoted to extolling our virtues.

Q: Share an example of a time when landing a client was especially difficult, and how you handled it.

A: We were in a competition with several other law firms. All were first-rate and experienced. We got the assignment because we did a better job of researching and understanding the client's peculiar and distinct needs, and presenting an attractive way for moving forward from the client's unique perspective, not anyone else's.

Q: What should aspiring rainmakers focus on when beginning their law careers?

A: Recognize that this is a service business. Clients look for outstanding service from their legal professionals, just as you would from a medical professional (people don't pick doctors based on their medical school degrees or test scores). Being smart, talented and well-credentialed is just the entry pass; you need to provide a level of service and caring that is second to none.

Q: What's the most challenging aspect of remaining a rainmaker?

A: Over the years, clients and industries change. People change jobs, companies are merged, new businesses are started, and technology changes everything. You need to constantly adapt to this changing environment. Standing still is akin to falling behind.

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