

## Rainmaker Q&A: Winston & Strawn's Dan Webb

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Dan K. Webb is a partner in Winston & Strawn LLP's Chicago litigation department and serves as firm Co-chairman and a member of the Executive Committee. His trial practice concentrates in the areas of major commercial, civil, regulatory and white-collar criminal cases. He has tried more than 100 jury cases, including numerous successful complex commercial and white-collar criminal trials, representing, on several occasions, large corporations in jury trials lasting two months or longer. He joined Winston & Strawn in 1985 as a partner, after serving as the U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Illinois.

Webb has spent his entire professional life as a courtroom trial attorney. He received international attention for his successful prosecution of retired Admiral John Poindexter in the Iran-Contra affair. As the U.S. attorney in Chicago, he spearheaded the "Operation Greylord" investigations into judicial corruption in Cook County, Illinois. Recent highlights include Webb's appointment as a special prosecutor in the successful and highly publicized prosecution of the former mayor of Chicago's nephew, who was convicted of involuntary manslaughter, and the corresponding investigation into official corruption. The prosecution was closely followed by a number of media outlets and was described as a "stunning" and "remarkable" achievement.

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

A. The new business comes from existing clients and new clients. And, most new clients are developed because of recommendations from existing clients. So the skill needed to be a rainmaker is the skill to provide top quality legal services to existing clients, which will lead to new business referrals.

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

A. Thorough preparation is critical to make a successful pitch. You must understand in detail the exact nature of the litigation matter you are pitching for, as well as your firm's background and experience in handling such matters. Also, you need to develop creative ways to handle the case in order to distinguish yourself from other firms that are pitching for the same matter.

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

A: I was once pitching to be retained by a prominent and successful person who had been indicted in connection with a Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violation. It was a major case and I was competing against some very talented white collar crime defense lawyers. The gentleman was having a difficult time making a decision.

I kept thinking about the case, and came up with a new and more creative approach of defending the case. I had concluded that without something new and different from what had been provided by my competitors as a defense, that I would never get the case. I called the prospective client and spent 10 minutes explaining my new theory. I got hired immediately.

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

A. Become a “people person.” By that I mean, constantly seek opportunities to meet new people. You need to make your presence felt and get involved in politics, community activities or charities. You need to appear to the world to be a lawyer who is on an upward adventure in life and in the practice of law.

**Q. What is the most challenging aspect of remaining a rainmaker?**

A. Just keep hustling. No matter how successful you become, you are only as good as your last case. New cases do not come walking through the door—you have to go out and get them. The obvious way is to ask for business—all they can do is say no. Clients and cases come and go and you have to constantly be refilling the pot. You can never say to yourself you have enough—there is always more to obtain.

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