

Media Mention: Tyler Russell on What it Means to 'Lead Well' and 'Be Authentic'

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Attorney Tyler Russell is sharing his thoughts on what it means to 'lead well' and 'be authentic.'

His comments appeared in an article spotlighting members of the North Carolina Bar Association (NCBA) Leadership Academy. Tyler was one of 17 lawyers from across the state, chosen for the 2020 training program, which is dedicated to helping young attorneys become effective

leaders in-and-out of their profession. But just a few weeks into the four-month-long program, COVID-19 closures went into effect, effectively altering this year's Leadership Academy. Despite the new challenges presented by the pandemic, nine members "offered their time by giving phone interviews on the topic of leadership in a time of change." This excerpt below focuses only on Tyler's insights. From the article:

Tyler Russell, who practices at Ward and Smith, P.A. in Raleigh, has been a lawyer for 10 years. More recently, he has built a practice area that didn't exist. The 2018 Farm Bill opened up a new world of regulatory issues for individuals and businesses, and over the past two years, Tyler has established an area of practice in hemp and cannabinoids. In doing so, he learned firsthand the effort needed to create a practice area. "When you build your own practice area, you are responsible for the development, sales, and marketing support, as well as building the brand and profile. You train people internally. It can be challenging and stretch you thin. The hope is that you continue to build success."

The opportunity to have a career in which variety is present is one factor that drew him to this profession. "Every day, something is different." Perhaps this makes lawyers uniquely gifted for moments such as these. In times of change, leaders must rise to the challenge. To succeed in seasons of transition, leaders must be both strong and willing to modify their methods. Tyler says, "We live in a world of rapid change. And to be effective, leaders must be able to manage it. But change is hard for us all. It makes us feel uncomfortable and uneasy. Leaders must be able to guide others toward their organizational goals through communication and motivation. And they must ensure their employees are positioned to be able to use and maximize their talents and commitment within the organization. But there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Strategies and approaches must change and adapt to address the current trends and difficulties faced by an organization."

As he continues, he mentions the power of authenticity.

“You have to have some vulnerability a leader, which opens up trust. That trust is something necessary as you guide people and help them to adapt.”

Establishing this kind of trust enables a leader to fulfill their goals of helping everyone to move forward in one direction. “A leader needs to be able to have a clear vision—to communicate pathways to get there. They help everyone to get on the same page. A leader is a great communicator. Where interpersonal communication can be lacking, guidance from leaders is needed.”

To lead with excellence, learning and connecting with others is crucial, and he hopes to progress as a leader through his work in the Leadership Academy. “We are never done growing or progressing. The way to grow is to engage with others and to learn.” Tyler defines a leader as someone who is able and willing to listen to people and their concerns. “I recently read a quote from Milton Friedman that read, ‘The more people are anchored in communities where they feel connected, protected and respected, the more people are ready to reach out and experiment. The less they feel connected, protected and respected, the more they’ll want to build walls to protect themselves from change.’ This rang true to me. Through my Leadership Academy experience, I hope I can grow my ability to foster trust, mutual respect, and inclusiveness as a leader. Without those foundational qualities, it is difficult to lead others and gain the consensus necessary to implement true changes and reforms, large or small, within an organization.”

To be able to create change, one must be honest about where growth needs to occur. Through the Academy, he is learning about his strengths and weaknesses. “I have more awareness about the need to recognize and realize my weaknesses. We must be willing to change ourselves.” For Tyler, experience is the best way to learn, and he looks forward to learning more with his fellow members.

You can read the entire article [here](#).