

Lessons
in Leadership:

**An Interview
with
Steven Weisbrot**

#BakersDozen
on
High Performance
Counsel



HIGH PERFORMANCE COUNSEL

Interview with Angeion Group's Steven Weisbrot

#BakersDozen is a series of interviews with leading professionals in the fields of law, consulting, finance, tech, and more.



Steven Weisbrot:

Executive VP of Notice & Comment, Partner, Angeion Group

Tell us a bit about yourself and how you came to be in the legal business?

I guess I was always destined to be in the legal business. You know the story: precocious toddler, argumentative adolescent, decent head on my shoulders... What I didn't know is that I would stop practicing, build a prosperous legal services company and consult on some of the largest and most complex class action cases in U.S. history.

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What do you do for a living right now?

I am one of the principals of Angeion Group, a class action notice and claims administration consulting business. My main role is designing notice campaigns to reach the millions of unknown class members so that they can decide whether they want to remain in the class action or take other action in the litigation. We've been pioneering the use of big data and digital advertising in the industry, which is exhilarating.

What has been your greatest triumph and your greatest success in the legal services field and what did you learn from each?

Whenever you are trying to change a status quo in an industry, you have to measure your successes in baby steps. When I first got into class action notice, the idea of using email to reach class members was seen as revolutionary. Now it is done on virtually every case. We are also infusing big data, advanced internet targeting and a host of innovative tactics to help move notice forward into the next century.

Do you think the legal industry is headed in the right direction, the wrong direction – or which direction?

This is a tough question. I am not sure how you measure the industry as a whole.

You're known for innovation and have been an inspiration to many. Who inspires you – and why?

I know it's cliché but my family is my inspiration. My grandfather immigrated to this country after losing the majority of his family in the concentration camps. He had met my grandmother in a liberation camp outside of Auschwitz . The following year they moved to the U.S., were married, raised an unbelievable family and while we lost my grandma several years ago, Grandpa is still alive to see me raise his great grandchildren—something that must have been unimaginable to him during his youth. I just want to do him, my parents, wife and children proud.

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What advice would you give to the younger generation contemplating law as a career?

The law is tough, and it is romanticized by novels and movies. I would counsel the younger generation to work for a bit inside the law before going to law school. If they still want to move forward, it can be extremely rewarding career but you need to understand the day-to-day lifestyle before committing.

How deep do you think will be the inroads of technology in the industry?

The adoption of technology in the law has always been interesting to me, since lawyers, and more so, judges, seem to be extremely slow adopters of new technology. However, in large part, the law sets the parameters for what can and cannot be done vis a vis technology. It's an interesting paradox. That being said, I don't think you'll find many other people in this industry who are more steadfastly in favor of utilizing technology to increase efficiency and efficacy than me and my partners at Angeion Group—it's what we are known for.

In ten years, do you see an industry much as it is – or do you see new players, new technology and an altered state?

I think in ten years, the law will still be five years behind corporate America in the use of technology. Not bad, considering the current deficit.

Are consultants and lawyers looking increasingly similar? Should the distinction continue?

I think the answer to this question depends on what area of the law the lawyer practices in. Corporate counsel are increasingly assessing business risk, but no one will confuse your average traffic attorney with a consultant any time soon.

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What are your thoughts on the increasing availability of data to guide client-side procurement of legal services?

Data is unquestionably important. It can give quantifiable metrics to success rates that simply were not available in years past. However, data only tells part of the story. A strong professional reputation and a robust business network, are still unwaveringly important.

Lawyers have typically regulated to keep non-lawyer investors out but that's a two-edged sword these days. What are your thoughts?

I think the UK has been leading the way on this front. It will be interesting to see the long term effects. It still too soon to know for sure.

Data only tells part of the story. A strong professional reputation and a robust business network, are still unwaveringly important.

What's the one most significant factor that will drive change in your view?

Would it be too glib if I said "necessity"?

Are we seeing the demise of the "profession" and the real emergence of the "business" of law?

I think they can (and do) often exist side by side.

What do you consider is the greatest challenge facing the industry?

There is an old saying that if you pay with peanuts, you get monkeys. Unfortunately, monkeys are sometimes hard to identify from afar.

What do you see as the greatest opportunity for the sector looking forward?

It depends on the area of law. For class action attorneys, the use of digital targeting to reach class members is nothing short of revolutionary.

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I work with some of the brightest minds in the industry, and on some of the most important cases in the country. I love what I do and I wouldn't change a thing.

Do you think law can improve its track record on diversity and inclusion? How?

I sure hope so. We need more women and minorities as lead counsel in important litigation. It is truly a sad state of affairs. That being said, many leading law firms are making great strides through diversity initiatives and I think that trend should augment in the coming years.

Who do you think are the greatest influencers on the industry these days?

A tricky question. Influencers in the law come from all corners: Obviously big law partners and Federal judges come to mind but so do hard working law clerks, the overachieving associate who is identifying novel cases, the public interest bar and the so many worth legal non-profits. Influence is everywhere and often it is not obvious or linear.

If you had to do it all over again, would you? Or what would you do differently?

I would have gone to business school. I am only half serious. I have a wonderful and rewarding career. I work with some of the brightest minds in the industry, and on some of the most important cases in the country. I love what I do and I wouldn't change a thing.

If a law firm was a startup pitching for investors, would you be an investor?

Depends on the personalities and the business model. Honestly, I'd rather own a restaurant.

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Wildcard Questions

If you weren't doing this, what would you be doing?

I would be the executive chef of a restaurant. Someplace small, and dark, and filled with laughter and the smell of food.

What would you like to be known for?

Being kind. Nothing else quite matters so much.

What would surprise everyone if they knew?

I'm not one to ruin surprises.

What's your favorite hobby or activity outside of law?

Cooking and photography. And yes, occasionally those worlds do merge.

What's your favorite sports team?

The NY Giants.

What's your favorite city?

I've been fortunate to travel a lot and see many different cities around the world. I love Barcelona and Beijing—Hong Kong, Rome, New Orleans and San Francisco but if there was a gun to my head, I suspect my answer would be New York. New York is "the city." Philadelphia is a close second.

What's your favorite food?

Grandma's chicken noodle soup.

Whats your nickname – and why?

Brot.

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Steven Weisbrot is a nationally-recognized class action notice expert and one of the premier thought leaders in the class action administration industry. He has authored numerous articles in national legal publications on such diverse topics as media notice programs, using digital media to notify class members, class action claims administration and proper claim form design.

This interview reflects the opinions of the author, and not of their affiliated organizations, or of High Performance Counsel



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