

**EXECUTIVE
PROFILE**

DAN ELROD

On changing the law rather than the facts, expanding in Nashville, going paperless and the value of a long walk.

Dan Elrod has suddenly found himself in a big role: Elrod is the new member-in-charge of Butler Snow, O'Mara Stevens & Cannada's Nashville office, which recently siphoned more than 30 attorneys from rival Miller & Martin. Now, Elrod is faced with leading the firm's rapid Nashville growth in a legal environment that is becoming more competitive by the minute.

Q & A

WHAT IS THE MOST OUTSIDE-OF-THE-BOX IDEA YOU HAVE EVER HAD IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL CAREER? In certain circumstances when clients are having difficulty with how a particular law or regulation is being applied or interpreted, we have pursued the solution of changing the law rather than becoming involved in protracted litigation or chronic conflict with a regulatory agency. In other words, sometimes it makes more sense to change the law to fit the facts as opposed to changing the facts to fit the law.

WHAT SINGLE THING MAKES YOUR ORGANIZATION STAND OUT? Client service. That is a hallmark of Butler Snow, and it truly differentiates us in the industry. We have a progressive team that advances a strong commitment to client service and an innovative approach to the practice of law.

WHAT DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAVE IN THE WORKS FOR 2012? Butler Snow continues to grow across the Southeast and around the nation, with a focus on expanding in markets that best serve our clients. Nashville is an essential part of our firm's overall growth effort, and we recently expanded to 41 attorneys in the city and nearly 100 in Tennessee. This makes Butler Snow one of the largest firms in the state and among the largest in the country, with 230 attorneys practicing in 12 offices nationwide.

HOW DID YOU WIND UP IN YOUR CURRENT POSITION? I'm on the executive committee at Butler Snow, and I would attribute that to longevity more than any particular skill or accomplishment.

WHAT WORD BEST DESCRIBES YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE? Collaboration.

GOAL YET TO BE ACHIEVED? One goal that is a work in progress is a paperless work environment to the extent possible. We know that paper cannot be completely eliminated, but it is our goal not to be in the paper storage business. The electronic storage of records is not only more cost-effective, it also means that our files are instantly available to our attorneys regardless of where they are located. This is just one example of how technology can enhance our ability to serve our clients.



NATHAN MORGAN | FOR THE NASHVILLE BUSINESS JOURNAL

WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE BUSINESS LEADER? Listening and leading by example.

PROFESSIONAL PET PEEVE? The over-use of email communications internally, rather than a phone call or face-to-face meeting.

WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT? Concerns as to the challenges our children and grandchildren will face in terms of the economy and an increasingly divisive political environment.

WHAT DO YOU DO TO RELIEVE STRESS? A long walk at Radnor Lake or Percy Warner Park works wonders.

FAVORITE HOBBIES? Hiking, fishing, canoeing, live music, reading.

PETS? A rescued pit bull, the smartest, sweetest dog on the face of the planet.

CAN YOU NAME A PERSON WHO HAS HAD A TREMENDOUS IMPACT ON YOU AS A LEADER? My father. He was a hard-working man of humble, rural origins, and he treated everyone he ever encountered respectfully. I never heard him say a harsh word about anybody. I can only hope to treat others as kindly as he did.

WHAT'S THE BEST GIFT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED? Two amazing sons, each uniquely accomplished, with distinct tastes and outlooks on life. I've learned so much from them. And the icing on the cake is an 8-month-old grandson.

PERSON OUTSIDE OF YOUR FAMILY YOU WOULD MOST LIKE TO SPEND TIME WITH ON AN ISLAND? In the interest of marital harmony, I will forgo more obvious choices, and instead say Roger Skraba, a hunting and fishing guide in Ely, Minn. Roger is one of the most resourceful and energetic people I've ever known, and a great raconteur to boot. With Roger on the island, there would be no lack of food, shelter and entertainment.

WHAT IS THE SIMPLEST THING YOU NEVER LEARNED TO DO? Computerized legal research, but it's still on my list.

YOU'VE JUST BEEN GIVEN \$100,000 TO DONATE TO CHARITY. WHERE WOULD YOU GIVE IT, AND WHY? Martha O'Bryan Center. They serve the poorest community in Nashville, and through education, child development and other services, Martha O'Bryan achieves amazing results in helping families break through the cycle of poverty.

About Elrod

Age: 64
Title: Member, Executive Committee
Company: Butler Snow O'Mara Stevens & Cannada PLLC
Address: 1200 One Nashville Place, 150 Fourth Ave. N., Nashville
Web: www.butlersnow.com
Employees: Nashville: 41; firm wide: 230
Most recently read book: "The Art of Fielding" by Chad Harbach
Favorite music artist: John Prine, Guy Clark and Allen Toussaint
Education: B.S., Middle Tennessee State University; J.D., Tulane University School of Law
Community involvement: Board of directors, Martha O'Bryan Center; founding member, Duck River Watershed Association; Hands On Nashville volunteer.

WHEN FACED WITH TWO EQUALLY QUALIFIED CANDIDATES, HOW DO YOU DETERMINE WHOM TO HIRE? The candidate who will relate best to his or her colleagues on a daily basis.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO CROSS OFF YOUR "BUCKET LIST" NEXT? Rim-to-rim hike of the Grand Canyon.

WHAT LINE OF WORK WOULD YOU PURSUE IF YOU COULDN'T WORK IN YOUR PRESENT ONE? Geology or agronomy.

ORGANIZATION OR COMPANY OTHER THAN YOUR OWN THAT YOU MOST ADMIRE? Our public and nonprofit hospital clients. They daily face the relentless pressure of operating efficiently while providing high-quality care to all patients regardless of ability to pay. Dealing with this challenge successfully requires extraordinary leadership.

WHAT IS THERE ABOUT YOU THAT PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO LEARN? I'm basically addicted to peanut butter.

BIGGEST PROFESSIONAL MISTAKE AND HOW YOU OVERCAME IT? As a young lawyer, I occasionally took on matters that were beyond my level of experience or knowledge. Fortunately, I had the good judgment to prevail on colleagues to come to my rescue.

WHAT SKILL WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO IMPROVE? Public speaking.

WHAT IS THE ONE BEHAVIOR OR TRAIT THAT MOST OFTEN DERAILS LEADERS' CAREERS? Hubris and focus on self-interest instead of interests of the firm.

THEY'RE MAKING A MOVIE OF YOUR LIFE. IS IT A DRAMA OR COMEDY AND WHO PLAYS YOU? Comedy. Billy Bob Thornton.

IF YOU COULD LIVE A DOUBLE LIFE, THE OTHER WOULD BE: A writer like John McPhee. No one in our culture has witnessed and written so elegantly about such a wide variety of experiences.

