

# WHO TO WATCH IN... LAW

ortheast Ohio's legal community is full of bright minds and interesting stories. In this section, we offer a cross section of just some of those who are making their mark in

Northeast Ohio's legal community and positioning themselves as leaders.

We also ask others working within the field to weigh in on challenges facing the sector in the future

# **KEVIN BROKAW**

Director of development/general counsel Geis Cos.

t Geis Cos., the Streetsboro-based real estate developer and industrial contractor, Kevin Brokaw recently was promoted to development director but continues

to fulfill the duties of his prior job as general counsel. Greg Geis, one of two brothers who own

the concern, said the promotion reflects how Mr. Brokaw has grown in three years at the company and earned added responsibility. "He's an integral part of the management

team," Mr. Geis said. The job playing the role of business adviser as well as legal counsel fulfills a lifelong goal for Mr. Brokaw, who said he always has sought to aid his clients' business interests as well as look out for their legal and financial interests.

Mr. Brokaw joined the company in 2009 as it began pursuing urban projects such as the MidTown Technology Park on Cleveland's East Side.

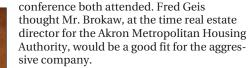
This year the firm launched the remaking of the former Ameritrust skyscraper and associated buildings in downtown Cleveland as an office, apartment and hotel project that incorporates construction of the new central headquarters for Cuyahoga County. Those projects dramatically heightened the fami-

ly-owned concern's profile and built on decades of experience creating suburban industrial parks and build-to-suit properties.

At Geis, Mr. Brokaw assists the firm's varied professionals, from those in architecture to construction, in every aspect of the development process, including site selection, closing, preparing financial estimates and getting the jobs going. He also works with the city, county and state

governments that provide alternative financing that is crucial to urban development projects. Mr. Brokaw's path to Geis, which led through

working for other developers and two law firms, surfaced when he and Fred Geis, the other brother who owns the company, struck up an acquaintance at a



Jack Waldeck, chairman of the real estate unit at law firm Walter Haverfield, does work for Geis Cos. and sees Mr. Brokaw as perfect for the company, and that goes beyond the

nuts and bolts of legal issues. "He has a high energy level," Mr. Waldeck said. "The Geis brothers work at all hours, day and night, when deals are happening. He can respond and keep pace with (them).

Mr. Brokaw positioned himself for the type of job he is in now way back at the Cleveland-Marshall College of Law at Cleveland State University, where he completed its program combining a law degree and master's degree in business administration. He said he went that route because his father, Glenn Brokaw, was general counsel for several Northeast Ohio real estate developers and practiced real estate law.

The younger Mr. Brokaw grew up in Independence hearing law and real estate stories at home. Today he lives in Brecksville with his wife Sarah and their two children, ages 5 and 8, and is as engaged as possible in his children's activities.

'As a family-owned company, Geis is very supportive of that," Mr. Brokaw said. "They encourage you to do well in their professional life and personal

### — Stan Bullard

# WHAT THE LEGAL **COMMUNITY IS SAYING**

ing to look outside traditional ap-

proaches to client collaboration.

We must be creative, quick to re-

spond and focused on making client service the most important

priority. Law firms must offer

clients a holistic approach, with

multiple practice areas able to

work together to quickly solve,

problem.

**Principal** 

leaders?

Flexibility,

creativity and

vision. As the

legal profession

evolves, I have

seen that those

who rise to the

top are not only

needs.

**JOHN R. LIBER II** 

Thrasher, Dinsmore & Dolan

minimize or head off a potential

What types of attributes will be

needed in tomorrow's legal sector

ambitious, but willing and able to break from the norm and come up

complex issues that arise. After all,

as attorneys we are the problem

lenges. Most of the time, the an-

al to craft a solution that is not only accurate, but compatible with

the clients' current and ongoing

What are some of the most

field going forward?

significant challenges in the legal

Without question it is financial.

At all levels the legal profession is

experiencing the beginnings of an

lenge. In the public sector, as gov-

ernments seek ways to solve their

own budget problems, resources

and funding for public attorney

for legal programs, judicial salaries

services are targeted. Financing for

reached the crisis point. And in the

student loans for law schools has

private sector, the competition

law firms and private practices

continues. The job market has

student loan debt.

shrunk, leaving many law school

graduates unemployed with large

This is why when asked by

students contemplating a legal career, I often recommend they

graduate school so they gain

greater perspective and unique

experiences to utilize in their

career opportunities.

take a break between college and

career, and take the extra time and

seek a dual degree to broaden their

over fees and the contraction of

unprecedented financial chal-

solvers for our clients' legal chal-

swer is not black or white. It often

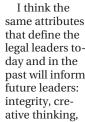
requires the individual profession-

with creative solutions for the

# **GEORGE S. COAKLEY**

Partner Reminger Co. LPA

What types of attributes will be needed in tomorrow's legal sector leaders?



good listening, writing and verbal presentation skills, ability to maintain a balanced lifestyle, fair, considerate, consistent and good sense of humor.

What are some of the most significant challenges in the legal field going forward?

One of the most significant challenges is how to integrate the rapidly developing technological advances into the basic mission of solving the client's problem quickly and cost-effectively. Another continuing challenge will be attracting and retaining talent and dealing with the mounting debt accumulated by young lawyers from college and law school tuitions.

# **DONALD P. FISCHBACH**

Partner

Calfee, Halter & Griswold LLP What types of attributes will be needed in tomorrow's legal sector leaders?

Nothing will replace competence, integrity and professionalism as the standards by which legal leaders are judged. In the future,

leaders will be challenged increasingly to be creative and strategic thinkers for their clients and assist their clients to be more and more proactive. Attorneys flexible and able to deploy focused skill sets to matters, whether new or old, will be in demand.

What are some of the most significant challenges in the legal field going forward?

With corporate and in-house counsel facing increasing pressure to hold down costs and proactively manage legal issues, and individuals able to access perceived information online, it becomes even more vital that attorneys are will-

**INSIDE:** More thoughts from local law leaders on the attributes needed in tomorrow's leaders and the challenges they will face in the future. Page 17

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- Association's annual meeting last month at Quicken Loans Arena; PAGE 18