

Charles V. Lawson

Senior Vice President,
Government Services



Education: MBA, Vanderbilt University Owen Graduate School of Management; BA, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Company Name: JND Legal Administration

Industry: Legal Services

Company CEO: Jennifer Keough

Company Headquarters Location: Seattle, Washington

Number of Employees: 200

Your Location (if different from above): Washington, DC

Words you live by: Know who you are and whose you are.

Who is your personal hero? Lucille Walker (my grandmother)

What book are you reading? *The Lincoln Conspiracy* by Brad Meltzer

What was your first job: Busboy at Red Lobster

Favorite charity: Alpha Phi Alpha; Pi Upsilon Lambda Charitable Foundation

Interests: Spending quality time with family and friends, and playing golf

Family: Husband to Alma Lawson, and father to Mahagani Lawson and Ariana Lawson

The Immeasurable Value of Mentors

I was introduced to the formal concept of mentoring while working as a summer intern for a Fortune 500 company during my junior year in college. Only much later in my professional career did I realize that I had benefitted from being mentored throughout my life—by family, friends, and my community.

Although these good people did not possess the traditional qualities of corporate America's definition of a mentor, I view their mentoring as the critical prerequisite to any personal or professional success I have achieved. They supported and advised me, and more important, admonished me, when needed. "Teachable Moments" were used to paint a picture of the consequences of my actions or inactions. A sense of accountability, morality, and pride was taught that I continue to carry today. The

only return they required from their collective investment in me was that I find my happiness and achieve my fullest potential.

As I progressed in my career, my mentoring relationships expanded to include seasoned professionals. It has not mattered that some of these relationships developed as a result of my being assigned to a mentor, while others developed more organically. Nor has it mattered that I have not shared cultural commonalities with many of these mentors, as I had with those of my youth. These mentor/mentee relationships worked due to the sincere interest my mentors had in my success, along with my willingness to be mentored. These relationships were meaningful in helping me broaden my insight, find my voice and develop my professional skills.

Of the many life lessons that my mentors have shared over the years, two were imprinted on me early in

my career: (1) Life will not always be as crystal clear as black and white, or even gray, but will often be clouded by multiple shades of gray; and (2) Always express opinions confidently, with reasons that are rational, easy to explain, and simple to execute, but do not expect complete audience agreement. Learning to be undeterred when navigating chaos, and to appreciate opposing opinions, has been instrumental, personally and professionally. These are the lessons I share with my mentees, as I aim to feed their growth and build their confidence.

I thank all my mentors who willingly and graciously invested their time, energy, and wisdom in me. If my career can be considered a success, it is largely due to their mentoring. As such, I encourage each of us to share the best versions of ourselves by mentoring the next generation of leaders.