

COMMERCE RAINMAKERS 2007

THINKING IT FORWARD Mentor of the Year

Keith Ketterling Lawyer/Managing Shareholder Stoll, Stoll, Berne, Lokting & Shlachter, P.C.

Do what you like, like what you do — the philosophy is woven throughout lawyer Keith Ketterling's world, from the clients he takes on to his volunteer activities to how he spends his lunch hours.

"When I pick up the phone or email someone for lunch, it's because I genuinely want to see them," he says.

Ketterling doesn't do cocktail parties. He doesn't glad-hand. He doesn't network. And he doesn't, he says, bring in business just because he can. If the soccer coach, Sunday school teacher, and father of three is going to dedicate his time to clients, it's going to be ones he likes and respects.

"It's more about who you develop as clients," he says, "rather than simply developing clients."

Part of his outlook is tied to his dual role at Stoll, Stoll, Berne, Lokting & Shlachter. As managing partner, he oversees the firm's business operations; as a practicing lawyer, he handles a full caseload of securities, business, and non-competes cases.

"The perception, I think, is that you simply bring in work and other people do it," he says. "But clients come to you because they want you to do the work."

The intellectual challenge and curiosity of law drew Ketterling to the profession. In every case he handles, he says, he gets to learn the underlying business, then use the new knowledge to solve the case. And if along the way, if he finds that he can't help a client, he'll refer a lawyer or a firm that can.

Those referrals work both ways. He's developed relationships with peers who, again, he respects and likes. About half his new business is referred by lawyers who've been on the other side of the table. And once he helps a client on a specific matter, he respects the referral by turning their business back to the referrer.

"You can't be so hungry to do business that you step on where that business is coming from," he says.

In the 15 years Ketterling has been with the firm, he's become the rainmaker of his generation of lawyers. A big part of his focus is the firm's future — and mentoring the junior lawyers who will keep the firm going into the next decades.

"What we've really tried to do is identify, within each generation of lawyers, who's going to bring in the business," he says. "We very badly want this firm to continue on."

