

September 27, 2018

A. Scott Bolden
Future Rainmaker

RE: Letter to a Rainmaker, 27 Years Later

Dear A. Scott:

It has been a minute since we last checked in with one another. Over 85 million dollars in revenues generated later for Reed Smith (“RS”), I think we have a lot to talk about, my friend.

I remember when I started at RS. It was on a whim. I was not recruited out of law school by a big firm and had no interest in one. Lawyers of color did not last long and the ones that did, were so out of touch with one another and their communities, I just did not think it would be a good fit. But, when you are working on the DC Council for \$35k a year, after serving as an Assistant District Attorney for 4 years in Manhattan, New York, and not litigating (my true love), a chance to get back into litigation, even at a big firm, was a shot, I could not pass on. And, I saw it as a challenge to defy the odds and all of my negative notions I had about large law firms, and lawyers of color. If selected, I would do it “my way”.

Well, as it turned out, I let it all hang out in my interviews and an offer was made. I could not believe it. They said yes. They needed a mid-level associate with trial experience, and I had it.

Unbelievable! What I knew, and they did not know was that I had not done much writing in 3-4 years at the NY DA’s office, and I had flunked contracts my first year at Howard Law School. The latter was a problem before starting, while the former was going to be a problem after I started.

The problem was solved in that the RS hiring partner never checked my law school transcripts and I, on my own dime, I took a legal writing course to brush up on my writing skills—both substantively, and to be more efficient at it. Both worked. This, along with my litigation skill set, made me a rising star at the firm.

Internal and external marketing helped me even more. I have never been a shy guy (smile), so I took every opportunity to volunteer to do mock trial openings, closings and cross exams of witnesses whenever the opportunities were available in RS litigation training and litigation meetings. At the DA’s office, trying cases with an hour prep time, or less, was not unusual, so these RS presentations with much more prep time, was pretty easy. So I did it, because I wanted the partners and associates to know and appreciate my skill set—why hide it!

After one year, the Partner who brought me to Reed Smith—my biggest backer—left the firm. I could have been devastated, but I saw it as an opportunity to grow even more. He did not invite me to leave the firm to join him, so I did not have much choice either. But it did something else for me—I

realized that I was on my own in this big law game, and I really needed a game plan to succeed. That I had to build a law practice. That I worked with the firm—not for the firm. Client development was essential whether I was at RS or elsewhere. It was time to go get some clients.

For me, it was all about building name recognition. With approximately two million people plus in the Washington, D.C. metro area, and 150,000 lawyers in the same region, how was anyone going to call me if they had a criminal case or if they were to get sued—if they did not know of me? No one knew me and I had all of this litigation experience and talent, but no clients. Whatever the plan was, or was to be, I had to build my name recognition—efficiently and effectively. So I did.

Besides billing 1850 hours a year, I did a ton of high profile retail business development. For any high profile client or organization in the business community—I wanted to be, or needed to be a part of their organization or associate with it. It was a brutal schedule to keep, not fair to my growing family, my wife and twin daughters, but I believed it would be lucrative, and providing a better life and lifestyle for them, would make it more than worth it—so I thought. I was right about the business plan, and wrong about the family. To say I was completely focused and driven for business development success rather than family focused would be a major understatement.

To be sure, between 1992 to 2008, I did political fundraising at the firm and at our home; I became President of the DC Chamber of Commerce, Chair of the DC Democratic Party, hosted an afternoon radio show called “What Matters Most”, and a local TV show called “Building Bridges for Business”, joined the boards of the DC Water and Sewer Authority, The Federal City Council, The Washington Board of Trade, and even ran citywide for public office. Indeed, I am sharing—not endorsing this schedule for anyone coming into big law after me, but it was the course I charted for success.

On the pro bono front, I represented public figures, politicians, their campaign committees, several Clinton appointees, athletes and entertainers for free or reduced rates, in exchange for the press and the public relations value it would mean for me and/or the firm. Surprisingly, many of these pro bono clients would later, become paying clients of the firm.

And as my press and name recognition grew, with the resources and belief in me by the firm, my cml business grew to at first \$1-2 million and eventually to \$5-6 million in cml fees generated annually. These revenues did not grow solely because of my growing name recognition, rather these revenues grew because my Partners and I, put ourselves in the position to do great work for clients, being well prepared for that work, and always asking for the business, and delivering great results for those clients--who needed it most.

But there were challenges along the way. After the 2006 election loss, I lost most of my business because deals closed, litigation settled, and having done nothing but campaign for a year, there was no new business coming in. I struggled and did less than a million in 2007. In 2008, I was named Office Managing Partner for the WDC office and joined the Executive Committee six (6) years later. The business returned, and I was back in the client business game.

I was also interested in taking my name recognition and my legal representation of businesses and clients beyond the region. I believed that after 25 years of big law, I had a lot to say about the law, politics and business. CNN, Fox, social media platforms, and other media outlets agreed, and so since 2015, I have been regularly sharing my best thoughts on the law, business and politics with millions of viewers around the world, who agree and disagree with my opinions. Either way, it is an awesome way to build name recognition, my brand and a new national client base.

And while there have been several wins and losses in my career. I made equity partner in 1995, a mere four years after I started at Reed Smith, but my family life suffered greatly and in 1999, I separated from my first wife, and was divorced at the end of 2000. I mentioned this because, it was a powerful lesson for me in my drive for power and money and business success. I often thought about having it all and work life balance. I am not convinced you can have it all. I think work life balance is more of a juggle—not a balance. Not keeping my family together was the toughest part of my success, and I often think that had I made partner in six years or eight years, it may have made a difference in my first marriage in keeping my family together. I may never know the answer to that question, but I do know it was hard on them and me, and I missed out on some stuff with the twins (my daughters, McKenzie and McKay) that I wish I had been there for them. I am proud to say that they, along with my oldest daughter Shayla, whom I first met when she was 19 years old, and my granddaughter, Ashanti, are my greatest accomplishments and I share an incredible loving relationship with all of them now. I must also say that I deeply appreciate family much more now, than I did when I started out in big law 27 years ago.

Maybe its maturity, maybe its old age and wisdom, maybe, but it's not regrets—regrets are never allowed. I think the Lord has just given me another chance to enjoy my kids and new family in ways that I just did not appreciate years ago, and that has to be a good thing for all of us. I certainly hope it is.

Indeed, since we last chatted, I have had a wonderfully, blessed and imperfect life, like most of us. Along the way, I have lost my mother whom I miss dearly, but along the way, I have trekked Kilimanjaro, the Sahara Desert, mountains in Iceland and Eastern Europe, fallen in love Erika, my second wife and my new son, Cole, and been energized and re-committed to my daughters who have grown up, graduated from college, and soon to be starting families of their own. Most importantly though, I am still chasing the business, but this time I am chasing it with the love and support of my children and family—and that feels really good.

This might be as good as it gets for me. Man, my life in big law has been a real blast and I am still having fun at it! There is certainly more to share with you, but I think you can figure out the rest of it. You and me--we have been together a long time...(smile). Let's catch up again real soon, my old friend.

Very truly yours,

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