

# A Profile

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## IN PROFESSIONALISM



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I started practicing law in 1988 in Beaumont, Texas, during a period in which the statewide legal culture encouraged “Rambo” litigation tactics. In my opinion, the perception of what lawyers were supposed to do and how lawyers were supposed to conduct themselves in order to properly represent their clients hinged primarily on making work and noise. The legal culture has changed and matured and, while some lawyers still practice in the old style, the majority of our profession has determined that our clients are generally best served by adopting a less overtly pugilistic approach. Having tried dozens of cases to verdict, it seems to me that professional conduct superficially includes doing one’s best to agree on what can be agreed and then joining issue politely but vigorous-

ly on what remains. The threshold is competency and candor.

There is more to professionalism. It is putting our best efforts toward the representation of our clients at a deeper level. Professionalism requires us to invest in truly learning our clients’ businesses, so that the counsel we provide does more than answer a question in a vacuum. It is our obligation to respond in the context of our clients’ businesses and what they are trying to accomplish. This requires an inquisitive mind, absorption of the costs of learning, the willingness to be challenged, the ability to examine problems from new perspectives, well-grounded creativity and, when necessary, standing up when the court asks the parties to announce ready or the Board asks for a solution. 