

Teaching Larry Flynt About Sex Harassment

Jonathan Light recalls 'surreal' moment of his legal career.

Jonathan Fraser Light, a name partner in the firm **LightGabler**, serves more than 500 national, regional and local employers in the private and public sector on day-to-day and litigation-related employment matters involving wrongful termination, wage and hour issues and class action litigation defense. He lives in Camarillo with his wife of 35 years, **Angela**, a retired public school teacher and former college admissions consultant.

How has the pandemic changed your firm?

It made us a lot busier because our clients needed our help on just about every aspect of COVID-19 for the last two years. We also learned that people working from home can still be as productive as working in the office.

How has it affected your clientele?

It has been a bloodbath for many of our clients. Some have thrived, but several have struggled mightily because of the downturn in hospitality and related fields.

What's your favorite part of being an attorney?

Helping clients with day-to-day issues with their employees related to wage and hour compliance and particularly the sticky discrimination and harassment situations, disability accommodation, and avoiding wrongful termination claims. I ghostwrite a lot of memos!

What will change in the post-pandemic market for legal services?

I am not sure anything dramatic will change. I think clients actually contacted us more often for other issues because they got in the habit of making frequent contact regarding COVID-19 clarification. So, in that respect, it may help to increase business in other employment law areas beyond COVID-19.

How would describe your role within the firm?

My favorite expression is, "Finders, Minders and Grinders." I am all three, but primarily a finder/rainmaker at this point. I obviously manage hundreds of clients also and I do have my grinder time.

What qualities in your personality make you a good lawyer?

Empathy. Although I am representing management, I do have empathy for the generally powerless employees and try to make their lives a bit better through help with my clients. I also do not mind saying, "If it were my business, this is what I would do." I think lawyers have trouble being decisive and generally leave it up to the client after laying out the options. The clients are often in a quandary about a decision, and a nudge from their lawyer can have a dramatically positive impact.

What is the most funny, unusual or memorable experience in your law career?

Most unusual would be conducting a one-on-one sexual harassment avoidance training at

the desk of Larry Flynt (along with his wife), publisher of Hustler magazine. That was a bit surreal. A very professional operation, however.

What are your favorite out-of-office activities?

A movie followed by cocktails and dinner has been my go-to with my wife for many decades. In 2019 before COVID-19, we saw 47 movies in theaters.

If you could change one legal rule or practice, what would it be?

The amount of penalties that an employer suffers with small mistakes on meals and rest breaks, or paying employees, are far too extreme; especially when you consider such claims on a class-wide basis. Even ticky-tack violations can generate six- and seven-figure settlements. It is truly unfair. Governor **(Gavin) Newsom** signed 84 employment-related bills last year. Governor **(Arnold) Schwarzenegger** signed 11 one year.

What's the one thing you wish your clients would do more often?

Call me before they take punitive action against an employee. Whether it is discipline or termination, they have to talk to me first and document properly before they take action. Lack of documentation is one of the biggest problems we have with clients who do not talk to us first.

What advice would you give to someone considering a career in law?



JONATHAN FRASER LIGHT

FIRM: LightGabler

YEARS AS ATTORNEY: 40

LEGAL SPECIALTIES: Management-side employment law

HOBBIES/PASTIMES: Author, "The Cultural Encyclopedia of Baseball"; movies; yoga; golf (since COVID-19 started).

Hone your communication skills, whether they are spoken or written. Communication is the key to dealing with co-workers, clients, judges, opposing counsel and government agency representatives. That is even more of an issue these days with the proliferation of email.

— Mark R. Madler

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