
Rainmaker Q&A:

Sills Cummis' Andrew Sherman

Andrew H. Sherman is co-chairman of Sills Cummis & Gross PC's creditors' rights/bankruptcy reorganization practice group in Newark, New Jersey. He has represented clients in a broad range of complex business reorganizations, debt restructurings and insolvency matters throughout the country.

Sherman also routinely represents lenders and other parties in financings and acquisitions involving troubled companies. He has recently represented the Official Committee of Unsecured Creditors in nine recent hospital bankruptcy cases: Saint Michael's Medical Center, Union Hospital District, Bayonne Medical Center, Christ Hospital, Hudson Healthcare Inc., Fairmont General Hospital Inc., et al., Progressive Acute Care LLC, Gardens Regional Hospital and Medical Center Inc., and Coshocton County Memorial Hospital Association. In addition, he has represented parties in significant commercial litigation in New York and New Jersey federal and state courts.

Sherman has been selected for inclusion in the 2012-2016 editions of *Chambers USA* published by Chambers & Partners under New Jersey Bankruptcy/Restructuring and the 2007-2016 editions of *The Best Lawyers in America* published by Woodard/White under Bankruptcy and Creditor-Debtor Rights/Insolvency and Reorganization Law; Litigation – Bankruptcy.



Andrew H. Sherman, Esq.

Q: What skill was most important for you in becoming a rainmaker?

A: The most important skill for me in becoming a rainmaker has been the ability to build and maintain relationships. I began my legal career at a large New York law firm and initially approached most matters in an adversarial manner. While this approach was helpful in learning to

litigate, I quickly learned that there were many different skill sets to become a successful lawyer.

I realized that the most successful partners at my firm were those who established strong ties with clients and other members of the bar. Thereafter, I built my own relationships with other lawyers and with current and prospective clients. I have been able to maintain and grow many of those relationships enabling me (with many strokes of luck) to develop my own client base across the country.

Q: How do you prepare a pitch for a potential new client?

A: Each time I am fortunate enough to pitch a new client relationship, I try to conduct as much diligence as possible to understand the client's business and legal needs. Lawyers, in general, are hired to solve problems and give advice, but that advice can't be in a vacuum. In order to convince a prospective client to hire a lawyer, that lawyer must demonstrate that he or she has the experience and expertise to address the client's needs. I have never been over-prepared in meeting a prospective client and I approach every new opportunity with that mindset.

Q: Share an example of a time when landing a client was especially difficult, and how you handled it.

A: I represented a company that was acquired through a bankruptcy sale and met the CFO of the acquirer apparently to transition the work to a different law firm. During the meeting, I told the CFO of our approach in the bankruptcy case and how our advice led to a great outcome for the client. We spent the next few hours discussing "war stories" of different bankruptcy cases in which we knew mutual friends.

The meeting then turned to more of an interview of our firm than a meeting to transition the work. The client told me how comfortable he was with his current law firm and I asked him to give us a chance with one matter before the work moved to a new firm. He gave us that chance and we retained the work for all matters. The company was later sold to a new buyer and, I continued to represent the same company after the subsequent sale and with a different management team. Also, when the CFO moved to a new company, our firm was retained to represent that company.

Q: What should aspiring rainmakers focus on when beginning their law careers?

A: First and foremost, aspiring rainmakers must learn their own craft and become skilled attorneys. A prerequisite for any aspiring rainmaker is a strong working knowledge of the law and the legal system. Second, find a mentor and do your best to hitch your wagon to that person. I learned to develop business by modeling other successful lawyers, but having a mentor to teach you the ropes is a much cleaner and easier path.

Third, be yourself and find your own path to success. The way I was able to build client relationships is different than many others and what works for me may not work for others. Fourth, embrace your failures. Each door

that is closed is a path to a new door and opportunity. I have learned more about myself and my ability to build relationships from the client pitches I lost than from the pitches in which I have been successful.

Q: What's the most challenging aspect of remaining a rainmaker?

A: The most challenging aspect of remaining a rainmaker is never taking anything or anyone for granted. Client relationships should be valued and nurtured such that every matter should be treated as if it was the first. Each client should be treated as if he or she is your only client. I always tell young associates that it is incredibly hard to build and establish a new client relationship, but it is really easy to lose one.
