



TECHGEAR

The iPhone 5 (starting at \$199 with contract) has a new ARM processor that makes it twice as fast as the iPhone 4S, and it's lighter and thinner. The phone also includes a new camera and taller screen.

WEBLINKS



EMILY FROST is a fifth-generation Texas lawyer. She is board certified in labor and employment law and handles commercial and employment litigation in Austin and Central Texas. Her blog, *Texas Business Matters*, can be found at www.texasbusinessmatters.com.

Dropbox (dropbox.com)

Dropbox allows me to share large files with ease. A client can put its documents in the Dropbox and from there my e-discovery provider can load them straight into a database for me to review. No more discs, flash drives, paper, or emails that are too big to go through. Love it.

FreshBooks (freshbooks.com)

FreshBooks is the easiest timekeeping and billing system in the world. It is cloud-based so you can enter your time from anywhere. It is also reasonably priced.

TED Talks (ted.com/talks)

This is where I go for inspiration. "Riveting talks by remarkable people, free to the world." Total brain candy.

Burn Note (burnnote.com)

If you like pretending that you are James Bond, you will love Burn Note. It allows you to send messages that self-destruct. My best friend and I, who in middle school used to pass each other notes written in code, are now users of Burn Note. It's easier than creating/using your own alphabet.

The Enterprising Lawyer: Rocky Dhir of Dallas

BY MERRILYN ASTIN TARLTON

Who are these "enterprising lawyers?" Actually, they are easy to spot. Look for the happier, more engaged lawyers. Deeply invested in the power of the work they do for their clients, they also have ample interests beyond the practice of law. And they seem to have more energy for getting things done than anyone in the crowd. You probably know one or two — you may even be one yourself!

In this interview, I talk with **Rocky Dhir** of Atlas Legal Research, LP, and Dhir & Associates, Dallas. Dhir is a global innovator in legal-process outsourcing.

Why did you want to be a lawyer?

To be perfectly honest, I went to law school in order to have a "backup plan." My real dream was to be an entertainer — singer, actor, stand-up comedian, and the like. I am pretty good at celebrity impersonations and used to perform a lot when I was younger. I had these grandiose visions of becoming a celeb. Then, once I started working in the law, I found that I really liked it. Today, perhaps more than ever before, the legal profession is changing, making it an exciting environment for disruptors like me.

What is the focus of your law practice?

I founded Atlas Legal in 2000. The idea was to outsource labor-intensive legal work to India. I have been told that Atlas Legal was the first company in the world to do that. At the time, no one knew what to call our practice. Today, it is referred to as "legal process outsourcing." Who knew we were spawning an entire industry? Atlas no longer outsources strictly to India. We have lawyers both in the United States and in India. We perform legal research, draft trial and appellate briefs, review litigation documents, summarize and manage contracts, summarize depositions, and do just about anything that corporate legal departments and law firms need help with.



Rocky Dhir is a Dallas lawyer and founder of Atlas Legal Research, LP, and the principal of Dhir & Associates. Contact him at www.atlaslegal.com.

In my law practice at Dhir & Associates, I am a business litigator, and I assist start-up companies with legal compliance and conflict management. Practicing law makes me more effective in my role at Atlas, and seeing the variety of cases we handle at Atlas makes me a better practicing lawyer. It's a wonderful symbiosis.

What is the real reason clients hire you?

With Atlas, clients hire the company, not me. I prefer it that way. The focus needs to be on the group, not the individual. Clients initially hire Atlas because they are looking to save money.

In my law practice, clients hire me for out-of-the-box strategic thinking. I try to apply that not only to the actual substance of the representation, but also to helping clients achieve their business goals while still getting what I hope is top-flight representation.

Who was your most important mentor and, briefly, what did he or she teach you?

My primary mentor in the law was the late Hon. Jerry Buchmeyer, for whom I clerked after law school. He was the Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas. Judge



Buchmeyer passed away in 2009 and was heralded as a Texas judicial icon.

Judge Buchmeyer taught me lessons on many levels. He was the smartest lawyer I have ever met, yet he was humble to a fault. I realized that his humility was a big part of his strength. It kept him sharp because he never assumed that he had all the answers; he would always question. As a leader, he had complete faith in his staff. He would review his law clerks' work product, but he would also take our suggestions very seriously. And he *never* micro-managed. He trusted us. I have learned over the years that fully trusting another person takes a tremendous amount of strength, and Judge Buchmeyer had that. Finally, he stuck to his beliefs. He was not focused on whether he was reversed or affirmed; he did not care what people thought of him. He ruled based on what the law said and what he felt was right within the parameters of the law. He made several landmark rulings, on issues like public housing and gay rights. Those rulings were often controversial, but he never backed down. Judge Buchmeyer's memory still reminds me to trust my heart and to do what I know is right, no matter what the world at large says.

What about practicing law, did you learn the hard way?

Humility is a lawyer's greatest shield. And yes, I learned that the hard way. On a few occasions, I became a little proud of my legal knowledge and assumed that a particular case or brief had an obvious answer. In my hubris, I would make silly mistakes and unwarranted assumptions that would come back to bite me. Luckily, I was able to control the damage, but I have learned to stay humble. To do otherwise is to do a disservice to the client.

What is your favorite technology tool?

The iPhone has changed my life, mostly for the better. Before smartphones were invented, I used to be stressed out whenever I left my computer — afraid that some important email

was waiting for me. Now, I can at least know what is out there and decide when and how to respond. The drawback is that work is always with me — in my pocket. But at least I can sort of relax when I am out.

What is your favorite non-technology tool?

My favorite non-technology *resource* is people. This sounds a bit clichéd, but over time I've found it to be absolutely true. Technology is wonderful, but there is no greater enabler in the world than truly top-quality people. We have found many at Atlas and are always looking for more.

Why would someone describe you as “enterprising?”

I am a big proponent of innovation and out-of-the-box thinking. In today's world of constantly changing technologies and business practices, adaptation is becoming not just a competitive advantage, but a survival tool. I always try to look for new ways to practice and to identify unfulfilled client needs. Usually, when I start out with an idea, people call me crazy. If the idea does not pan out, they call me “foolish.” When the idea does work out — like with legal process outsourcing — they call me “enterprising.” I think that to be considered enterprising, you have to be willing to take the risk of failing.

Where do you think the practice of law is going?

I think lawyers can learn a great deal from the business world and business literature. Eventually, I bet lawyers will get wise to this and start studying and implementing business principles. Two of my favorite principles are: (1) putting the firm ahead of oneself, and (2) entrusting others with key tasks. You often hear corporate clients say, “We hire lawyers, not law firms.” I think that idea is slowly getting turned on its head. Even solo practices will need to think more like enterprises. Lawyers are also notorious for being control freaks. That will have to change as law practice takes on more

facets (e.g., technology, financial planning, time efficiency, user-friendliness, etc.).

Where are you going?

A very wise holy man once said to me, “If you want to make God laugh, just tell Him that you have a plan.” While I embrace planning, that statement made me realize that even the most well-thought-out plans can hit roadblocks. I would like to see Atlas Legal grow into a truly large-scale enterprise. Along the way, however, I plan to keep studying what made some large organizations successful while others perished. I hope we can grow Atlas Legal while still retaining its focus on client service and quality. Those two terms are thrown around a lot and given lip service. I want us to truly personify those concepts.

What are people most surprised to learn about you?

People are completely thrown off by the fact that I can do celebrity impersonations. I have even performed as Elvis in front of crowds. (They called me “The Maharajah of Rock.”) In fact, I did impersonations during my interview with Judge Buchmeyer. He asked me to do Kermit the Frog impersonating Ross Perot. I guess he liked the attempt; I got the job.

Where do you turn when things go really badly?

I turn to my priest for guidance. My wife, Shefali, gives me emotional support. My co-workers inspire me to overcome; I owe it to them. ✪

Editor's note: This article is derived from an article that originally appeared on AttorneyatWork.com and is republished here with permission. Both Marilyn Astin Tarlton and Rocky Dhir spoke as part of the Adaptable Lawyer track at the 2012 State Bar of Texas Annual Meeting.



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