

Checking In

Practical Law Advisory Board Members Discuss Their Current Work and Key Legal Developments in Their Practice Area

Education: 2000: J.D., The Ohio State University College of Law; 1997: B.A. (Political Science, History, and Geography), Youngstown State University.

Career in Brief: 2017–present: Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP, Partner; 2016–2017: Blank Rome LLP, Partner; 2011–2016: Norton Rose Fulbright US LLP, Partner; 2002–2011: K&L Gates LLP, Partner and Associate; 2000–2002: US District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, Law Clerk to US Magistrate Judge Nancy Vecchiarelli.

What technology did you or your firm incorporate into your practice during the COVID-19 pandemic that you will continue to use after the pandemic?

The use of video conferencing, which was a capability our firm had and used before the COVID-19 pandemic, exploded for our team during the pandemic. While every technology has its supporters and detractors, I believe the use of video conferencing is a net benefit for us to interact with our colleagues, clients, and opposing counsel, as well as the courts. The ability to incorporate visual cues into a conversation helps convey information accurately and fosters a more engaging connection than just a telephone call. I noticed during 2020 and early 2021 that civility increased among attorneys, and I believe having face-to-face conversations, even if through a screen, played some role in that.

What tips do you have for attorneys to best navigate the changes in their work environment and the practice of law in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic?

The pandemic has changed the way most attorneys practice law, giving us greater flexibility in how, when, and where we work. We can perform our work from pretty much anywhere that has a secure internet connection (subject to the ethics rules), which allows us to better manage our personal lives.

However, we must not forget that interacting with our colleagues keeps us grounded, allows us to bounce ideas around, and helps us tackle the hard work and challenges. It also reminds us that we are part of a profession that serves an important role in our society. Whether it is showing up at the office, attending bar functions, or just connecting with friends who are attorneys, do not give up that personal connection.

What changes do you see on the horizon that will significantly affect your law practice? I focus my practice in the oil and gas and energy space. One emerging issue that has a significant impact on my practice is ESG (environmental, social, and governance) investing and accountability. The oil and gas industry really has stepped up and addressed this issue head-on.

How have you used Practical Law recently? I was preparing a response to a demand letter, and our client had a possible statutory defense that the claimant waited too long to send the notice. The ability to assert the defense depended on how a certain time calculation in the statute was to be made, but the answer was unclear from the statute. I asked a new associate to research the issue, and the associate wrote back to me the same day, not only answering my question but doing so with a citation to an on-point resource from Practical Law. And we were able to assert the defense!

What career advice would you give to associates that you wish someone had given to you early in your career?

It is never too early to begin developing your network, both internally and externally. Keep in touch with friends and classmates from law school. Beyond maintaining friendships that will serve you well personally, these relationships can help you professionally. For example, some of those contacts will go in-house and serve as potential clients in the future. Others will become attorneys at law firms and may be able to refer a client or matter to you or serve as a referral for one of your clients.

Also, give the senior associates and partners within your law firm the same level of service that you would if you were interacting with a firm client. You want to be top of mind for those folks when they are looking to staff a matter or to bring others onto the client relationship team.

If not an attorney, what would you wish to be? If I could not work in the legal field, I would become a travel agent and put to use my love for visiting new places, planning trips, finding the best deals, and interacting with people. And, of course, I would have to take many trips myself so that I could make informed recommendations to the clients!



JEREMY A. MERCER

PARTNER

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What has been the most important pro bono project that you have worked on recently?

For the past several years, I have been part of a team at my firm representing a military veteran pursuing a civil rights claim against a police officer and others arising out of an improper search and seizure at his property. It is very rewarding to work with this individual in helping to ensure that the invaluable right to be secure against illegal searches and seizures is protected. We have survived summary judgment and are headed to a jury trial if the case does not resolve at an upcoming mediation. It also has been a privilege to work with some excellent associates at the firm on the case, and I look forward to having them as active members of the trial team if we proceed to trial.

What is one of your hobbies outside of work?

I do not know if you would call it a hobby, but I enjoy cruising! Cruising is one of the greatest ways to travel. You can unpack just once, see many different destinations, and have all of your meals and myriad activities included in the itinerary. Whether visiting glaciers in Alaska or the engineering marvel of the Panama Canal, or just relaxing on a balcony with the ocean before you, cruising is wonderful. I cannot wait to get back out there after the pandemic. 🚢

Check out these Practical Law resources contributed by Jeremy Mercer:

- [Settlement Tactics in US Litigation](#)
- [Settlement Agreement and Release](#)
- [Settlement Agreement Drafting Issues Checklist](#)