

Katten Attorneys Discuss Link Between Pro Bono and Well-Being on *Pro Bono Happy Hour* Podcast

June 3, 2022

Featured on the *Pro Bono Happy Hour* podcast, leaders of Katten's pro bono program shared the significant ways in which pro bono and community service can boost mental health and well-being among attorneys and business professionals in law firms. Highlighting Katten's dual commitment to promoting public service and prioritizing employees' mental health, Jonathan Baum, senior counsel and director of pro bono services, and Janet Goelz Hoffman, senior counsel and pro bono counsel, discussed the correlation between pro bono work and well-being.

Touching on Katten's [recent programming](#) offered during Well-Being Week in Law, Jonathan noted the inclusion of a webinar entitled "Social Well-Being: How Doing Good Helps You Stay Well," which presented a panel of Katten attorneys and business professionals who reflected on how pro bono and community service has contributed to their overall well-being. Among many themes that came out of the panel, Jonathan found that the most compelling message was "how good it makes you feel to be able to do good for somebody else."

While working with pro bono clients may unearth traumatic feelings or memories for some attorneys, such as in the realm of domestic violence and abuse, Jonathan explained that pro bono interactions are mostly uplifting and provide benefits ranging from life perspective to engagement outside the bubble of professional organizations. Topping the list of benefits is the opportunity to form new connections with other individuals, according to Jonathan, who has found that clients are deeply grateful for someone taking the time and interest to listen to their problems.

"Those good feelings convey back to the participating attorney and make them feel really good about that interaction," Jonathan said.

With a focus on the transactional side of pro bono service, Janet explained that the appeal of transactional work is the chance to contribute to the work of entities engaged in positive goals – such as organizations trying to effectuate "richness of life", community providers addressing local issues and start-ups attempting to resolve difficult situations. Furthering those missions can be enormously

satisfying, even if the pro bono work entails the type of straight-forward corporate work that attorneys provide for paying clients.

Stressing the importance of communication skills for attorneys, Janet noted that the target audience for attorneys is generally groups of people who fall within a "fairly narrow band, socio-economically or educationally."

"One of the things that happens with pro bono situations is that you're talking to a much broader swath of people than you would if you were just talking to the standard clients that walk in the door of a major law firm like Katten," she said. "And it helps you grow as a person, to be able to figure out a way to communicate a complex set of laws or a winding path to a resolution to someone who doesn't come with the background where they already know half the answer."

And as to how Katten assists attorneys find time for pro bono service, Janet touched on the team mentality and collaborative spirit underlying the firm's pro bono program. When attorneys' daily demands shift, pro bono work might need to be handed back and forth among attorneys – but work is never taken away from them. "So much of the practice of law at its best is collaborative," according to Janet, who noted that the pro bono experience can enhance that sense of collaboration as attorneys are able to work closely with a group who can provide support when work needs to be shifted.

Jonathan further underscored the significance of Katten offering billable-hour credit for pro bono work, with attorneys allowed to count at least 100 hours of pro bono work (and more with approval, which is routinely granted) toward billable-hour requirements. He explained the importance of Katten attorneys understanding that pro bono work is work for the firm, which eases their burden to find time for it.

["Well-Being and Pro Bono," Pro Bono Happy Hour, May 31, 2022](#)

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