

Boss. What does Boss mean? According to the Webster Dictionary it defines “Boss” as a person who exercises control or authority; one who directs or supervises workers. While this may define some bosses, it does not fully describe my boss who I am nominating for Boss of the Year. I define “Boss” as a person who is active in life through his/her community and profession, who leads and teaches, who shows generosity and respect to colleagues and staff, and who relies upon his/her upbringing and values. Being active is not a problem for my boss! In fact, he just might be the person inside the Energizer Bunny.

He has been on the go since the beginning of his college days from being an active member of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity where he served as Chartering Chairman and helped revive the fraternity back to Lincoln after a 22-year absence, to being a member of the UNL college rodeo team, to receiving the National Member of the Order of Barristers award for having exhibited excellence and attained high honor through the art of courtroom advocacy, to officiating high school basketball and football games as well as college basketball. And now as an attorney, he continues to be involved in various organizations including, the Lincoln and Nebraska State Bar Associations, President of the NSBA-Young Lawyer Section, and Legal Chancellor for the Nebraska United Methodist Church. That’s just to name a few.

But it’s not all the activities he is involved in, the cases he wins, or the fair settlements he makes for our clients that makes him a great boss, but it’s his personality, hard work, and desire to do the right thing. My boss believes there are no dumb questions and never makes staff feel incompetent for asking questions, even if we have asked the question many times before. In fact, he takes that opportunity to teach and explain the answer, especially the “why” behind it. It is not uncommon for my boss to ask staff for their opinions, whether it is case related or about an office procedure. He values our view points from a staff perspective and appreciates our work experience and knowledge in order to help him be more efficient and productive. He never hesitates to compliment, especially in the presence of others, the work staff does for him. He encourages and supports staff ideas. In fact, when I was joining LLPA, I showed him my proposal to the Management Committee as to why they should support staff involvement in this organization, and he told me, “This is a good idea. Make sure you follow through with it and make it happen.” He is unselfish and puts others before himself. He has helped staff members move from apartment to apartment, scooped snow for a colleague and his wife before they brought home their newborn, and has loaned out his “Litigator” truck for others to use. My boss is a team player. He never makes you feel he is superior to you, but rather a co-worker working together on common task. He shows his appreciation for his “team” (secretary and legal assistants) by taking us to lunch; a time where talking about work is not allowed! Instead he takes that moment to learn who we are outside the office.

When it comes to work, he is a workhorse. It is no surprise to receive emails from him at 5:00 a.m.! Thank goodness he doesn’t expect us to reply at that hour! And he is on a first-name basis with the cleaning staff! He is often tasked with a wide variety of cases, which he never says “No” to, no matter how swamped he is. He sees it as an opportunity to learn and further his career for the firm. I think this type of drive and dedication comes from the values instilled by his parents and being raised on a ranch where he learned the true meaning of hard work. Now, my attorney is not all work; there is “non-billable time”, especially with the sense of humor my boss has. Often you will hear laughter roaring from his office as you know he is telling one of his animated stories or him and other attorneys quoting funny movie lines. However, it is this relaxed, but yet productive atmosphere he creates that makes coming to work each day so enjoyable. You see, he may be called a “Boss” on paper, but to me and others in our firm he is our co-worker and friend. And that is why I believe he deserves to be named LLPA’s Boss of the Year.