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How I Made Practice Team Leader: 'Make Inclusion a Real Priority,' Says Justin Murphy of BakerHostetler

By Law.com Staff
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Justin Murphy, 53, Partner at Baker & Hostetler, Washington, D.C.

Job title: Leader of the antitrust team

Practice team: Member of the antitrust and white collar teams

Law school and year of graduation: Georgetown University Law Center, 2001

The following has been edited for style.

How many years have you been at your firm?

Two years

What made you pick your practice area?

I like working with companies and individuals on difficult legal problems. A big part of the appeal is helping clients through high-pressure, high-stakes, and sometimes trying moments and working alongside them to reach the best possible outcome. Antitrust work, in particular, sits at the intersection of strategic counseling and tough litigation, so it's a good fit for the kind of matters where clients need clear judgment, quick action and a steady hand.



Courtesy photo

Justin P. Murphy of Baker Hostetler.

How did you develop your expertise in your practice area?

I've been fortunate to learn from a series of mentors who gave me opportunities, challenged me and helped shape how I practice. I've also grown by working on complex matters for a wide range of clients across different industries, in addition to my time at DOJ as a trial attorney in the Criminal Antitrust Division, which has given me a broader view of the issues they face. My long involvement with the ABA Criminal Justice Section has been another important part of that development.

Why did you want to become a practice team leader?

I saw it as both an honor and an opportunity because the firm truly prioritizes the antitrust team. It's energizing to help lead a team of talented lawyers across offices and areas of

focus, and I enjoy creating an environment where people can do their best work and build strong practices. I also value the chance to think strategically about where the team is headed and how we can continue to grow. For antitrust, that means continuing to build a team that is nimble, collaborative and ready to step into consequential matters when clients need us most.

What skill sets do you need to be an effective practice team leader (i.e., knowing more about the practice, hiring, business development, financial management, etc.)?

I'm still learning, but I think the job requires a balance of business judgment, communication and people leadership. It helps to understand the firm's goals, know your team's strengths and create a culture built on trust and collaboration. Listening, being flexible and recognizing others are all parts of leading well.

How do you balance client work with management work?

There's no perfect formula, and it's something I'm always working at. For me, it comes down to prioritizing well, communicating clearly and being transparent about what needs attention. I'm also lucky to work with collaborative colleagues and a deep bench, which makes it easier to share responsibility when needed.

How does having a practice team leadership role give you a sense of the broader strategic vision of the firm?

The role gives me a clearer view of the firm's culture, direction and strengths across practices. It also offers insight into key industries and markets, as well as how decisions are made. I've found it especially valuable to learn from other teams on everything from lateral integration to talent development and leadership planning. Being part of BakerHostetler's broader litigation practice group gives the antitrust team access to colleagues across markets and disciplines, helping us respond thoughtfully and efficiently when significant matters arise.

What other roles or experiences help you in this current role?

A lot of it comes from watching strong mentors and team leaders and trying to apply what I learned from them. That includes making sure people have room to contribute, be heard, and take on meaningful roles. Outside the firm, I've spent many years chairing an ABA Criminal Justice Section committee, which has taught me a great deal about managing different perspectives and working through strategy and decision-making.

What are key priorities for your practice area?

BakerHostetler's Antitrust team is a deep, full-service practice that handles novel and complex civil and criminal matters across the country and internationally, often in very high-stakes situations. One priority is continuing to deliver excellent service while also giving younger lawyers meaningful opportunities to contribute and grow. Another is further expanding BakerHostetler's national antitrust presence and continuing to attract top talent and sophisticated client work. More broadly, we want to keep building a team that can

respond quickly, scale when needed and stay focused on the kinds of complex matters that are most important to clients.

Is succession planning a part of your role as a practice team leader, and if yes, how so?

Absolutely. Succession planning should be a meaningful part of any team leader's role, especially at BakerHostetler where we have so many talented first chair trial lawyers. I want to make sure others on the team have opportunities to grow, deepen their skills and build client relationships. Mentorship is a big part of that, and I try to ensure both senior and junior colleagues are positioned to step in when needed. It's important for clients to know and trust more than one lawyer on a team.

Is there anything that surprised you about the role?

What has stood out most is how much of the role centers on people. I've really enjoyed working with colleagues in a different way and helping think through important strategic decisions. It's a reminder that leadership often involves helping lawyers navigate professional challenges that go beyond the legal work itself.

How has the role given you insights into client needs?

It has given me a broader perspective on the trends affecting clients across industries. It has also created more opportunities to collaborate with other BakerHostetler practices so we can respond to client needs in a more fulsome and strategic way. That kind of cross-practice coordination is especially important in antitrust and other high-stakes litigation, where clients often need more than narrow legal advice. They need a team that can see the bigger picture and move quickly.

Is there any other advice you'd share for those looking to become a practice leader?

Be transparent, listen carefully and make inclusion a real priority. If you focus on building a positive, effective team culture, the leadership piece tends to follow.

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