



JOHN PAUL DEVERNA

LAWYER + FOUNDER OF DEVERNA LAW

"INTUITION MATTERS. I ALWAYS KNEW I LIKED HELPING PEOPLE. SO WHEN I WAS IN SERVICE OF THAT GOAL, I FELT RIGHT."

John Paul is a lawyer who started his own private practice working in civil rights litigation. His interests in reading and helping others is what brought him to his profession.

WHAT IS YOUR UNIQUE GENIUS?

"I deliver for my clients motivated by my heart, by using what's in my head."

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN THIS CAREER?

"Upon graduating undergrad, I wasn't exactly sure what I wanted to do. So I joined the AmeriCorps and moved to San Diego. I played a matchmaker between people who want to volunteer and those that had volunteer opportunities. I realized that I appreciate doing public service work. With that in mind, I started thinking about where can I have the biggest impact which led me to consider law school."

IN WHAT WAYS IS YOUR CAREER A PERFECT FIT FOR YOU?

"This job is the perfect fit for me because it allows me to marry two parts—it takes my advocacy skills with my desire to help people. That alignment of head and heart is why I come to work every day, and work super hard to try to get the right results."

WHAT DOES A DAY IN THE LIFE LOOK LIKE?

"A day in the life for a lawyer depends on what type of lawyer they are. Currently, as a civil rights attorney, my job doesn't involve me going to court every day.

Oftentimes I'm taking calls from clients and trying to help them explain to me what happened to them. Right now we have a caseload of approximately 300 cases. Of these 300 cases, myself and my team are trying to help them to secure the best result."

"The most important thing as a lawyer is to not miss a deadline."

WHAT SKILLS DOES IT TAKE TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN YOUR JOB?

"You need to get into law school, so it takes hard work and perseverance. You need judgment, you need to be analytical, you have to communicate well. As you're taking in information, you want to think about what's the best way to articulate your position. You've got to be creative about it because you want to be able to appeal to the individual you're addressing."

WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU KNEW WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER?

"I wish I had learned a long time ago that fortune favors the bold. As a lawyer, we're risk averse by nature—we try to make the careful right decision. But professionally, I've found that sometimes fortune does favor the bold."

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF ON YOUR JOURNEY?

"I'm most proud of a piece of luggage that I received from a former client. This client got themselves mixed up with the law but instead of facing up to the consequences, they took off.

For 20 years, this person carried fear, then they met me. We got a very good resolution in the case. After 20 years of always looking over their shoulder, this person was able to move through life freely. They gave me that luggage, which was a metaphor for finally ridding themselves of the "baggage" they had carried for 20 years."

WHAT IS THE COOLEST PART OF YOUR JOB? WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF YOUR JOB?

"The coolest part of my job is being able to make change. I feel like I'm able to do well, while also doing good.

The hardest part of the job is just doing it all. I have all this information that I have to digest, process, prioritize and then act on. Dealing with what's being asked of me on any given piece of information coming in, and being able to figure out how to best deal with that. It's also the most rewarding because there's no better feeling when a client comes in so happy with what you have done for them."

WHAT IS THE ONE THING THAT PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOUR FIELD/JOB?

"It's not just a lot of paperwork. There is paperwork, but there's so much more. Every day I'm working with people and trying to figure out how to conquer a problem."

WHAT WAS A DEFINING MOMENT IN YOUR LIFE?

"When I was in ninth grade, I wasn't going to wrestling practice. I thought hanging out in the woods was more fun than running laps. A coach came up to me and said, 'I see something in you, you can do better.' It was so appealing to me because of the way he said it not in a berating way, but more of an invitation. I recognized that there was more to life. I started going to practice and putting in the work. I developed good habits that today are bearing fruit."