

Executive Profile

EUGENE BLACKARD, JR.

MANAGING PARTNER,
ARCHER NORRIS, PLC

Company: Archer Norris PLC, a Walnut Creek-based law firm with about 90 lawyers.

Background: Blackard started with firm in 1989, joining as an associate.

Education: University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law, J.D.; California State University, Sacramento, B.A.

First job: I worked in a fruit drying shed, pulling pits out and putting them on drying racks in Vacaville.

Residence: Danville.



Business philosophy

Essential business philosophy: Always adapt to changing market conditions while maintaining a persistent goal.

Best way to keep competitive edge: To understand that the business community and law firms in general need to provide a consistent product. I try to understand what competitors provide and make sure my firm provides a better product.

Guiding principle: Honest communication.

Yardstick of success: When everybody in the organization understands the firm's goals and they work toward a common goal.

Goal yet to be achieved: A comfortable retirement.

Judgment calls

Best business decision: Probably to change my focus coming out of college from politics to the law. I was working in a position that

had a lot of uncertainty when it came to pay and I ended up working four and a half years in a political field, and it was better to focus my attention on the practice of law.

Worst business decision: The decisions I've made led me where I am. I don't have a worst.

Toughest business decision: When I've made changes that impacted people in their professions and careers. But you have to make these decisions to make sure your business and organization can adapt and move forward.

Biggest missed opportunity: The opportunities I've missed I've been grateful I missed them.

Mentor: The executive director of the political party where I worked. He had an open-door policy and he said only produce work you are proud of. John Meyers.

The one word that best describes you: Direct.

True confessions

Like best about job: The interactions among my colleagues. Every day I learn something new. I work with competent, qualified people who keep me focused and motivated.

Like least about job: It does seem to impact my leisure time more than I would want it to.

Pet peeve: People who lack confidence to express their views and opinions.

Most important lesson learned: To be successful you need to be an active listener.

Everyone has their own life experiences, and if you listen to them, you usually can pull out information that can be useful in your career. Everybody wants to be listened to. No one wants to be talked to.

Person most interested in meeting: Justice Scalia. He exemplifies my political world view better than anyone else on the Supreme Court, and I consider him to be one of the most brilliant people alive today.

Most respected competitor: Gordon and Rees. They are a well-managed, successful law firm.

Three greatest passions: Spending time with my family, politics and travel.

First choice for a new career: An oceanographer.

Predilections

Favorite quote: "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice and moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue." Sen. Barry Goldwater.

Most influential book: Isaac Asimov's Foundation Trilogy and Edmund Burke: "Reflections on the Revolution in France."

Favorite cause: Participation in the political process.

What's on your iPod: Primarily classic rock from Beatles to Blue Oyster Cult.

Favorite status symbol: A well-made Swiss time piece.

Favorite movie: "The Wind and the Lion."

Favorite restaurant: Bridges in Danville.

Favorite vacation spot: The deck of any cruise ship where I can sit and look at the ocean.

Favorite way to spend free time: Sitting in my backyard reading a good book while enjoying a well-made cigar.

Automobile: A 2006 Porsche 911 Carrera 4 Cabriolet.

—Eric Young ■