

Susan Rector
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Susan Rector leads the Intellectual Property Practice Group at Schottenstein Zox & Dunn (SZD), overseeing professional quality of service delivered to clients in this area of law. She has advised public and privately held companies in all aspects of intellectual property ownership, and has experience in a wide variety of business transactions, including business formation, restructurings, and mergers and acquisitions.

Rector serves as partner in charge of marketing and business development for SZD, a business law firm with operations in Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati, Ohio.

Rector is past-president of the Columbus Zoo, the Junior League of Columbus, and FirstLink, Inc. She currently serves on the board of trustees for the Children's Hunger Alliance and the Columbus Zoo.

Have you always wanted to be a lawyer? I was an economics major at Wake Forest University. Then I went on to law school at the University of North Carolina. I would say that I've always wanted to be a lawyer because I've always been interested in public policy and regulation. I actually received the opportunity, earlier in my career, to work with the Legislative Service Commission. I would listen to bills that were being debated in committee and would help to redraft or amend them. It was an opportunity to really dive into my interests and get the experience I needed to grow. I worked with the Commission for two and a half years and then came to SZD. I started as an associate 22 years ago, and in 1993, I became a partner. **Your early experiences made you interested in law?** Math always came easy to me. I love to quantify things, so I was drawn to public policy and economics. In junior high, I watched my friend's dad, who was a prosecutor, in court. It was an amazing opportunity and I was completely taken by the experience within the courtroom. (The animal cruelty case turned on the quantity of hay that a farmer was giving to cows — I found it fascinating that they were quantifying hay!) I always remember that day. Also, I was an office assistant for a solo practitioner for a week during the summer in high school. I had to type jury instructions for a judge, and I loved that I had the opportunity to read about the courtroom experience; it just came to life for me. I'm not sure these were the defining moments, but they definitely left an impression. I felt justified in my interests.

What was one of the first encounters where you had to prove yourself? In college, I applied for the Harry Truman Scholarship. I was nominated and flew to Washington, D.C., and was interviewed by a very tough man who asked me some unbelievably challenging questions. And, as I usually do, I gave him my opinions. When I left the interview, I was sure I didn't get the award. I felt that maybe I had been too overt, too abrasive with my opinions. Turns out, I won the scholarship. That moment showed me that I had to always be willing to take a shot, no matter the outcome. **Today, you are a partner of a business law firm. What have you learned about yourself as a leader?** I have high standards for myself. I have learned that not everyone thinks and operates the way I do. I've learned how to motivate people in ways that make them comfortable. People have different strengths and as a leader, I must learn how to use those strengths. Also, I've learned when to say no. There was an instance where I accepted a volunteer role and my heart just was not into it. It ended up not being a good experience. One of our original founders of SZD once told me, "Never join an organization you don't want to be a president of." By that, he meant if you're passionate about something, you'll naturally want to succeed at it. I've always remembered that advice. **What are you passionate about?** Community service. The law is analytical, but I like volunteering, especially with nonprofits, because it takes an entirely different mix of skills and talents. Volunteering and community service provide me with balance. My mother was a great role model in terms of community service. She was a consummate volunteer. That really left an impression on me. **What gives you energy?** Accomplishing things. **What have you contributed to the firm from a leadership perspective?** I've organized the firm's leadership program where we help to train and educate our senior associates and youngest partners on how to be more responsible and accountable for their practice. They learn to take ownership in their roles in three ways: how to make a transition into their new position as a partner, how to focus on interpersonal growth, and how to encourage themselves and others to think beyond themselves and the firm and think of the community. **What advice would you extend to someone just starting off in their career?** Find out what you enjoy and feed your soul with your interests. **What successes are proud of?** Probably becoming involved with the Columbus Bar Association and the Foundation as its president six years ago. This experience definitely helped me personally and professionally. I've learned that I can be very different in different situations. I can be very quiet or very vocal. And I realized that it's okay to be both of those things. Choose your moments wisely.

Work/life balance: I love this quote: "I juggle everything and balance nothing."

One thing you can't live without: Sunshine.

Biggest pet peeve: When people don't return phone calls.

Publication or Web site you read every day: *The Wall Street Journal*.

Best trip ever: Trekking through the mountains in Rwanda and Uganda, coming face to face with gorillas.

