

The ATL Interrogatories: 10 Questions with Gary Sasso of Carlton Fields

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Ed. note: This is the latest installment of The ATL Interrogatories. This recurring feature will give notable law firm partners an opportunity to share insights and experiences about the legal profession and careers in law, as well as about their firms and themselves. Gary Sasso, president and CEO of Carlton Fields, represents business clients in securities fraud and consumer fraud class actions and other complex litigation at the trial and appellate level, in the financial services industry, energy sector, products manufacturing industry, and services sector. Before joining Carlton Fields in 1987, Mr. Sasso worked as a law clerk for Justice Byron R. White on the United States Supreme Court; and as a law clerk for Judge Spottswood W. Robinson, III, of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

1. What is the greatest challenge to the legal industry over the next 5 years? Focusing on law firms, many are struggling with what they think they should be. None of us has a crystal ball, of course, and many firms are “all in” with fairly aggressive strategies in one direction or another (ranging from international “mega-firms” with massive investment in overhead to laser-focused boutiques) and everything in between. Neither stagnation nor contraction is a viable option. So the greatest challenge we all face is how to grow in a world fraught with risk. Focusing on individual lawyers in private practice, the greatest challenge is finding the right fit among law firms that are increasingly absorbed with these structural issues. As professionals, we all want more than a job and a pay check. We want a place where we can have highly fulfilling work with colleagues we respect, like, and trust.

2. What has been the biggest positive change to the legal profession since the start of your career? Our profession has become much more diverse and inclusive. This has made us better and truer to our professed values.

3. What has been the biggest negative change to the legal profession since the start of your career? Most “negatives” have countervailing “positives,” and we prefer to focus on those.

4. What is the greatest satisfaction of practicing law? Helping a client in need.

5. What is the greatest frustration of practicing law? Losing a meritorious case.

6. What is your firm’s greatest strength? Our firm has many strengths. We offer great talent, client service, and depth of expertise in our core areas of practice while maintaining a lean business model. We strive to maintain a climate of mutual respect and support among all of our attorneys,

government consultants, and staff and an unflagging commitment to professionalism, diversity, the Bar, access to justice, and our communities. **7. What is the single most important personal characteristic for a successful lawyer in your field?** Drive to be your best. **8. What is your favorite legally themed film or television show?** The most authentic trial practice movie ever made is My Cousin Vinny ([affiliate link](#)). When Sam Rothenstein warns Billy Gambini that Vinny could ask all the right questions on cross examination but get all the wrong answers and end up proving the prosecution's case, he nailed what all trial lawyers need to know but often overlook. That said, one of my top three movie picks of all time is To Kill a Mockingbird ([affiliate link](#)), and I'm sure this has something to do with the legal theme of that movie. **9. What is your favorite legally themed book (fiction or non-fiction)?** Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality ([affiliate link](#)) by Richard Kluger. **10. What would you have been if you weren't a lawyer?** The leader of another business, a writer, or a professor. Posted with permission by [Above the Law Blog](#).

Authored By



Gary L. Sasso

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