PROFILES IN LEADERSHIP JOURNAL 2026 EMERGING LEADERS AWARD

Harnik Shukla

Partner

Knobbe Martens



Education: JD, University of California; Irvine; Master's in Electrical Engineering, University of Toronto

Company Name: Knobbe Martens

Industry: Legal (Intellectual Property)

Company CEO: Steven Nataupsky

Company Headquarters Location: Irvine, CA

Number of Employees: 550

Words you live by: No pain, no gain.

Who is your personal hero? High school computer science teacher

What book are you reading? *Dopamine Nation* by Anne Lembke, MD

What was your first job? Calculus tutor

Favorite charity: Public Interest Law Foundation (UCI Law)

Interests: Tennis and coding.

Family: Wife and two kids, 8 and 6.

Taught by one of his heroes, he now leads others

Leadership means sacrifice. I did not always know this. One of my heroes is my high school computer science teacher (Mrs. P). She gave nerdy (before nerd became cool) kids like me a community. She ran an after-school club and spent so much of her time and energy training us for computer science competitions. She sacrificed her evenings and weekends so we could succeed. What strikes me now about that experience is that I never once heard her ask for appreciation or complain about how much time she spent on us. As I have transitioned into a leadership position, I have come to appreciate just how much Mrs. P sacrificed for us. I use her example as motivation to train and promote associates on my team even when I am busy (which, as an attorney with two young kids, I always am).

Leadership also requires being in the trenches with your team. Why did a bunch of high school kids not mind doing math in binary or hexadecimal systems after school on Fridays? Mrs. P was there with us every step of the way, with pizza and donuts as treats. As attorneys, we are driven by client demands, which sometimes require late nights and weekends to meet a deadline. I like to be there for my team in those situations and take on tasks to alleviate their burden. For example, we had a filing due Monday morning this week. When we received client feedback on Sunday afternoon, I offered to finalize the draft myself, a task I would normally have left to a junior member of the team. I never want my team to feel that they are in this alone.

Leadership requires honesty. I think Mrs. P was one of the most direct teachers in my school. We knew when our performance was not up to our potential. There was nothing mean about it, just a direct, "Let's hope everyone else sucked more than you guys did in that contest." That did happen, our low score (by her standards) was enough to beat everyone else, and we placed first that year. I strive to provide similarly direct feedback, along with specific steps on how to improve. Recently, I noticed that my mentee was struggling with communication during client meetings. We worked on an initial script she could practice before meetings to help her get started. This helped build her confidence. I hope that, like Mrs. P, I can help others succeed by showing up, doing the work alongside them, and telling them what they need to hear.