



Edward D. Buckley of Buckley Bala Wilson Mew. Courtesy photo

Q&A

Lifetime Achiever: Edward D. Buckley, Buckley Bala Wilson Mew

The Daily Report will honor attorneys and legal professionals at an awards ceremony in May.

April 21, 2025 at 12:00 PM

6 minute read

Awards

By ALM Staff

Edward D. Buckley, one of the founding partners of Buckley Bala Wilson Mew, is among the recipients of the Daily Report's 2025 Lifetime Achiever award. Buckley, who died last month, is being honored posthumously but was aware of the award, which was announced before his passing. Read a Q&A with him below.

Describe one of the proudest moments in your career as a lawyer.

While the word "proud" isn't one I typically use to describe my work, I do see it as an opportunity to create transformative change in the lives of my clients and the people I serve. There are a few moments that have deeply resonated with me, particularly in pro bono cases where no fee was involved, yet I was able to make a profound difference.

One such moment involved a pro bono client whose young son had been kidnapped. The father, a restaurant server with limited financial means, was desperate for help. His co-workers came to me, asking if I could assist in finding the child. I was able to locate the child, free him from a locked room, and reunite him with his father. The emotional weight

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of helping restore this family and witnessing their reunion is something I will never forget.

Another moment occurred while I was volunteering in a small village in Honduras, where we were working to install a water system. A man with a bulldozer arrived, claiming that we had no right to dig trenches for the water pipes. The villagers asked me to intervene. I approached the man and explained that we had every right to be there. To my surprise, he stopped yelling and turned away. While I initially believed my advocacy was the reason, I later learned that two men with sawed-off shotguns had quietly positioned themselves behind me. I'm certain their presence played a significant role in convincing him to leave.

In my legal practice, I've been fortunate to secure life-changing verdicts and settlements for clients facing difficult challenges. One case that stands out is that of a Hurricane Katrina survivor who relocated to Atlanta and found work at a hotel, only to be sexually assaulted by a member of the hotel staff. After a lengthy litigation process, we reached a settlement that not only provided her with financial security but also helped her secure stable housing. This settlement dramatically altered the course of her life.

While I've had the honor of securing victories in high-profile cases, what brings me the most satisfaction is helping clients who have limited resources and no other means to help themselves. These are the cases where I feel I can make the most profound impact, giving people the opportunity to rebuild their lives when they have no other avenue of support.

What qualities should a lawyer possess to become a successful and effective leader?

To be a successful and effective leader, a lawyer must first and foremost possess strong communication skills, both verbal and written. However, beyond technical proficiency, empathy is one of the most important qualities a lawyer can have. It's essential to listen to clients, understand their circumstances, and put yourself in their shoes. This empathy allows a lawyer to advocate for what's right and truly help those in need.

Frequently, I encounter potential clients who are desperate for assistance, having been turned away by other lawyers who told them their case wasn't strong enough or didn't want to put in the effort to take it forward. A true leader in the legal field looks beyond surface-level obstacles and

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demonstrates the resilience to explore all possibilities. They are willing to dive deeper into the facts, conduct thorough investigations, and perform the necessary research to uncover the strengths in a case, even if those strengths aren't immediately obvious. This willingness to dig deeper can make the difference between a case being dismissed or achieving a successful resolution.

In addition to technical expertise and empathy, an effective lawyer-leader must also have the ability to inspire others. They lead by example, encouraging their teams to think critically, work diligently, and always act in the best interests of their clients. Leadership is not just about winning cases, but about elevating others and fostering an environment where all stakeholders are motivated to succeed and uphold the values of justice.

How do you see the field of law evolving in the next decade?

The role of artificial intelligence (AI) is undoubtedly going to have a significant impact on the legal field in the next decade. As AI continues to evolve, lawyers must balance the benefits it offers with the potential risks of overreliance. AI has the potential to streamline and simplify many time-consuming tasks, which could drastically increase efficiency. Routine activities such as document review, legal research, and even drafting initial drafts of contracts or legal memorandums could be completed in a fraction of the time it traditionally takes. This would free up valuable time for lawyers to focus on higher-value work, such as strategic counsel, client relationship-building, and complex litigation.

However, while AI can be a powerful tool, lawyers need to remember that it is not a substitute for human expertise. AI-generated work must always be carefully reviewed for accuracy, and lawyers must continue to apply their critical thinking, legal judgment, and creativity to ensure that any work produced meets the rigorous standards of the profession. Mistakes or inaccuracies in legal documents can have significant consequences, so lawyers must remain vigilant in verifying any AI-generated content before it is submitted to courts or shared with clients.

Beyond the courtroom, AI is also shaping the workplace. It is already being used to monitor employee productivity and performance in various industries, and this trend will likely increase. In the legal field, AI may become a tool for tracking billable hours or managing workflows, but there are potential privacy risks. The use of AI to monitor employee behavior

could infringe on privacy rights, particularly if it extends to surveillance of thoughts or personal activities outside of work. As AI's use in the workplace expands, there will need to be clear guidelines and protections in place to ensure that employee rights are respected and that AI is used ethically and responsibly.

Overall, the future of law will be shaped by a delicate balance between leveraging the power of AI for efficiency and ensuring that human oversight, creativity, and ethical considerations remain at the core of legal practice.

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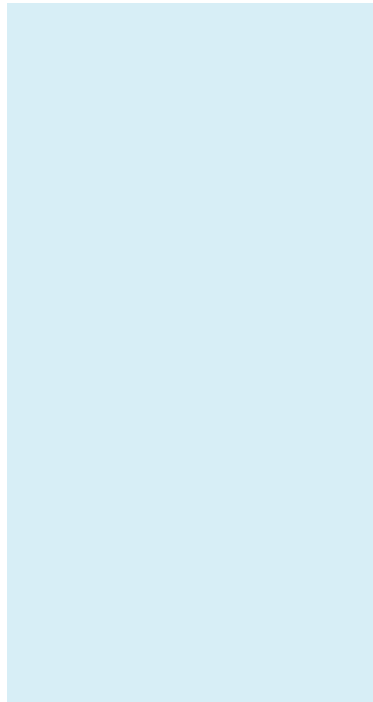


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