

When Wayne Outten was a high school student, like many, he didn't know what he wanted to do after graduation.

"I was a science and math whiz in high school and my teachers told me I should be an engineer," he said. "I thought, 'Sure, what do I know?'"

Wayne enrolled at Drexel after being accepted into an elite engineering fellowship after high school. Unfortunately, it didn't take long for Wayne to realize that his high school teachers were wrong.

"I hated engineering; I just had nothing in common with my classmates," he said, noting that he was far more interested in politics than his protractor.

He then decided to give marketing and finance a try, knowing that his parents always wanted him to go into the family business after graduation.

"During my junior year at Drexel in the late '60s, I got interested in national politics, the civil rights movement, and the anti-war movement. I started to realize that going into the family business wouldn't be as socially useful as I wanted to be."

He went on to explain that he didn't know the first thing about becoming a lawyer but liked the idea of a lawyer's role in society, so he decided to go to law school. "Lawyers always seemed to be in the thick of important happenings," he said.

In 1971, Wayne enrolled at NYU School of Law, focusing on civil litigation and civil liberties. Several years later, while teaching an introductory seminar at NYU, he was given the opportunity to write a book on employee rights for the American Civil Liberties Union.

Wayne referred to this opportunity as a turning point for him because that was when his professional interests turned toward employment law.

Although he knew nothing about the subject, he focused on researching the topic and learning as much as he could. After five years of research and writing, the book *The Rights of Employees and Union Members* was published in 1984, and Wayne had developed a real passion for this area of law.

Jump to more than 25 years later and Wayne is now the managing partner of the largest law firm in the country that focuses solely on representing employees.

According to Wayne, his firm, Outten & Golden LLP, stands by the credo, "Doing good while doing well".

Outten & Golden represents only employees; it never represents employers. Wayne feels it is extremely important to protect and enforce the rights of individuals against their much larger and more powerful employers.

In addition to representing the rights of the individual, Wayne was also drawn to employment law because it is constantly growing and evolving.

"You can't open up the newspaper these days without finding articles about employment law issues. I find it an endlessly fascinating field," he said, noting that the first law signed by President Obama involved amendments to an employment rights statute.

Wayne explained that Outten & Golden has ten practice groups that focus on specific areas of employment law. "I believe we are the only firm that has a practice group devoted to LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) issues," he said.

Another of the firm's practice groups focuses on family responsibilities discrimination. This relates to the rights of employees who have family responsibilities, such as mothers.

Recently, the firm has seen the adverse effects of companies using information such as criminal records or credit history in the hiring process. "Someone may be denied a job solely because of a bad credit report caused by inability keep up with medical bills or mortgage payments," Wayne said. "The bottom line is that it's not fair to exclude someone from a job based on a factor that is not related to the job."

One of the things that makes Outten & Golden so special is the firm's diversity. "We have a very diverse firm, and that is not by accident," Wayne said.

About two-thirds of his firm's 32 lawyers are women, while 25% are non-Caucasian and three are LGBT.

"We are considered an employer-of-choice in our area, which has allowed us to attract and recruit excellent candidates. We pay attention to, and solicit applications from all over, and that just naturally evolves into hiring attorneys with diverse backgrounds. I think it's terrific."

He added that his firm treats all of its lawyers and staff with dignity and respect, empowering and supporting them in their professional endeavors.

Wayne shares that one of his secrets to success is finding a career that allows you to do something you really enjoy.

"If you enjoy it, you'll do it well; and if you do it well, you'll probably be able to make a living doing it," said Wayne.

Wayne definitely practices what he preaches - not only doing his job well, but doing something that he truly loves and is passionate about.

"My work is very rewarding because it has an impact on others," he said. "Our clients' problems are very real, and I see it as a pleasure, challenge, and opportunity to apply my knowledge and experience to figuring out how to help them."