

# Reprint of Published Interview of William M. Audet

*Reprinted from Sacramento Magazine*

Shortly after beginning my interview of attorney William Audet, I quickly realized that he was not going to be the typical press-hungry subject I am accustomed to, and it didn't take long to determine that he is definitely not a common, run-of-the-mill attorney. His background is dynamic, his philosophies earnest, and his sense of ethics refreshing.

I discovered, not only in my interview of Mr. Audet, but also in conversing with his colleagues, that he is a rare breed of attorney, who is passionate about his job and has a genuine love of the law. He does not take a case based on potential financial gain, but thrives on the give and take of law, and the ability to provide justice, in a real sense, to individuals who would otherwise have no place to go. While many consider the notion outdated, Mr. Audet is confident that if you believe in your cause, truly apply yourself and do not fold, you will succeed in providing an excellent service for your clients, as well as the firm and its employees. His ethical sensitivity is apparent in his care and concern for his clients. "If you worry about making money in this type of practice, you cannot do the right thing for your clients."

Mr. Audet's firm, Audet & Partners, LLP, is based in San Francisco, California, but he routinely deals with plaintiff's attorneys in all corners of the United States. His practice, which has cases pending in numerous state and federal jurisdictions really is a national practice, with an international scope including the recent filing of what was one of the first class action lawsuits in Mexico. Despite this success, Audet & Partners, LLP strictly limits its practice to individuals and small businesses. Offers to represent the "other side" have been promptly rejected, and interestingly, many of Mr. Audet's referrals and recommendations come from attorneys of large defense firms, not just other plaintiff attorneys.

Mr. Audet's work schedule reflects his dedication to the law and his practice. I have received emails at 2:00 a.m. on issues ranging from a recent court decision to updates on his book regarding federal discovery, with follow-up emails coming in from him at 6:00 a.m. that same day. He is constantly applying new technology and innovative approaches to improve the efficiency and overall quality of his practice. I was told that he was one of the first attorneys who had a laptop with wireless access more than 15 years ago.

Mr. Audet's appetite for learning and obsession with technology motivates his regular attendance at legal and technical conferences, always on the lookout for new and better technology that will increase his ability to help his clients. For example, among others, he annually attends the Salesforce and Oracle conferences to learn about the latest platforms that might further his mission to best serve his clients. In his opinion, "The legal field is five years or more behind most industries in terms of technology and its practical application to the legal field, be it court filings, client communications, ordering medical records, dealing with other law firms on briefs and the like." Audet & Partners, LLP has fulltime IT personnel to assist with electronic discovery issues, now important in all large cases of any nature.

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Mr. Audet's academic and career achievements are beyond impressive. After graduating with highest honors from Golden Gate School of Law in San Francisco, he received a number of scholarship offers, he decided he enjoyed law school so much that he wanted to also pursue a master's degree in law, with the sole purpose of "studying law just to study law". While the degree normally takes five years, he finished in three; and, while earning his masters at the University of Wisconsin Madison, School of Law, he also served as a civil rights attorney for a prison law project, and somehow found the time to also teach first and second year law students.

Near the end of his studies, Mr. Audet intended to apply to Stanford University's Doctor of Science of Laws (SJD) program, but after receiving a phone call from an old friend in San Francisco, was convinced to move back to SF and serve in the esteemed world of clerking for the federal appellate courts. After one year, he was offered the opportunity to continue his clerkship with a federal district court judge, a highly desirable position. Upon completion of this clerkship, a judge in the chambers next to the judge he was currently clerking for requested that he stay and work for him for a year. I later discovered the rarity of an attorney who has served as a clerk in the appellate courts in addition to having clerked for multiple federal judges. Generally, most attorneys will clerk for a judge and then move on to a standard job in the private sector.

During the time Mr. Audet was serving as a clerk (generally 12 hours a day), he also worked at a local movie house, as he later explained, "to watch free foreign movies," another passion of his (indeed...I found an old resume of his that listed one of his hobbies as "cineaste"). When I asked further about this, Mr. Audet said that he was only able to get the job by not disclosing to the manager that he was an attorney and by 'volunteering' for the 8pm to 1am shift three days a week. As part of his early exploration of his love for foreign movies, he became a member of the University of Wisconsin's Foreign Film Club while working on his LLM.

Clearly, with an LLM, a JD with highest honors, three years of experience litigating civil rights, and three federal clerkships, Mr. Audet was a highly desired candidate for any defense firm in California. He decided, however, that instead of taking the common career trajectory, which would have included a quick road to a partnership attached to a significant salary, he decided to focus his talents on the plaintiff's bar, helping victims of securities fraud, antitrust and consumer fraud initially, then branching out to trial work in personal injury, mass torts and defective product class and non-class actions.

At his first post-clerkship position at a private firm, Mr. Audet focused on accounting fraud, taking night classes to learn the fundamentals of accounting for use in cases against large accounting firms involved in securities fraud. In less than five years, he made partner at a nationally known plaintiff's firm. He has fond memories of working at the firm, noting that at the time, in the early 1990's, class action did not have a negative connotation, and the field was wide open. He loved working with the senior partners and learned a lot from the managing partner,

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Robert Lieff, whom he considers a mentor, and with whom he remains good friends. “Bob is just a genius...he can recognize legal trends years in advance.”

This firm grew from 9 attorneys to 60 in less than 6 years, and while Mr. Audet was making a good amount of money, he left it behind to again focus on helping pro bono, civil rights, trials and other more complex cases, which was difficult to do at a larger firm. “I felt, given the size of the firm, I needed to connect again to real clients, smaller cases and learn how to better myself as a trial lawyer.” Mr. Audet joined a small regional PI firm, and, with a great deal of effort and networking, expanded the firm to be a nationwide plaintiff’s firm.

Mr. Audet came to realize that to control his own destiny and really represent the clients to the best of his abilities, he needed to start his own law firm. In 2007, after placing his house as collateral, selling his car for cash, and borrowing as much as he could, he started Audet & Partners, LLP. He hired some of the best lawyers and paralegals he could find in the Bay Area. He says that looking back, “...this was scary and exciting, as I put everything on the line for my clients. I do not ask the clients to prepay for fees, expenses or even costs of the case. They have already suffered financially and emotionally, so how can I ask them to pay in order to be able to see a jury?” In less than a year, Mr. Audet was confirmed in his risky decision to start his own firm. Today, Audet and Partners, LLP is able to “take on any client, any case, anytime, and we have the funding in place to take on any large corporation represented by the best defense attorneys.”

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