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Reimagining Law Firm Leadership: A CFO's Blueprint for Resilience, Empathy & Reinvention

Katie Langer · Tuesday, November 4th, 2025

In this episode, hosts Amanda Koplos and Rob Joyner welcome William Washington III, Global CFO at Baker McKenzie, for a deeply personal and inspiring conversation.

William shares his unconventional journey — from being a high school and college dropout, a young father facing eviction, and coping with personal tragedy, to rising to the C-suite of one of the world's largest law firms. He explains how resilience, mentorship, and relentless focus on improvement propelled him forward.

The discussion covers William's approach to leadership as an introvert, the importance of professionalizing law firm operations, and his creative strategies for finding and developing talent. He also shares candid thoughts on AI in law firms, how technology will reshape the industry, and why leaders need to create space for every personality type to thrive.

Along the way, you'll hear stories that are both entertaining and insightful, including a surprise encounter with Brooke Shields and how William once applied Lean Six Sigma principles to shorten a church service.

This episode is a must-listen for anyone interested in leadership, resilience, and the business side of law firms.

About the Guest

William M. Washington, III is the Global Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for Baker McKenzie.

As CFO, he is responsible for the firm's financial operations, which totals more than over \$3 billion in revenue across 76 offices in 45 countries. In his role, he is responsible for over 1,400 people and serves on the Executive Committee, Financial Committee and many other strategic committees related to the Firm's operations.

William has also served as the CFO – Americas for Hogan Lovells where he worked closely with firm leadership to formulate a vision for the future of the firm and provide an understanding of the firm's financial picture to help drive profitability.

Before joining Hogan Lovells, William worked at two other AmLaw 100 law firms and has served in leadership positions in other diverse industries including Consulting (Accenture) and Financial Services (Fannie Mae).

He holds a bachelor's degree in finance from Mississippi State University, an MBA from the University of Maryland University College, and a Master's in Law Firm Management from George Washington University. He is also a Certified Manager of Quality/Organizational Excellence and has a Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt.

William is married to Tracy Washington, retired - International Finance Corporation (World Bank) and Adjunct Professor - Georgetown University. They have four wonderful children and reside in Bethesda, MD.

Episode Resources

[William on LinkedIn](#)

[Baker McKenzie](#)

[REDF](#)

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