



## **2019 Ones to Watch: David Wilkes, Wilkes Law Group, PLLC**

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Name: David Wilkes

Title: Managing Attorney

Company Name: Wilkes Law Group, PLLC

Year that you entered your current field? 1997

What advice can you offer to someone who is interested in a career in your industry?

This is a field in which you must master highly technical rules and principles over a period of years, and also have the ability to negotiate deals with authority. Personality counts for more than you'd imagine. Your adversary must also know that you will go to trial if you don't get a fair deal for your client. It's also an area of law that is far more creative than may at first appear: your skills as an advocate with a deep understanding of valuation theory gives you the ability to place your client in an advantageous position that others may overlook.

If you have a mentor, who is it and how have they influenced your personal & professional growth?

My mentor is a man named Jerry Grad, the founder and CEO of the International Property Tax Institute and a close personal friend of many years. He and I have traveled the world together and I have gained so much of who I am professionally from him. Jerry connects with a vast array of professionals from the largest international corporations and governments in a way that is utterly human and humble but never lacks good business sense and keeps an eye on the prize. Jerry understands that no one likes a "hard sell", and that no one will buy from you if they don't see the value proposition for themselves. These are principles that apply to all realms of my life.

What do you consider to be your greatest professional accomplishment in the past 12 months?

Resolution of Doral Arrowwood Conference Center tax appeal for a property in extreme distress, cutting taxes by nearly 70% and obtaining millions of dollars in tax benefits. This took some four years of intense litigation and a deep knowledge of valuation theory for a complex property, as well as strong relationships with municipal officials and the New York Courts. Also, being elected President of the National Association of Property Tax Attorneys.

Who or what do you attribute to your success?

I often joke that I owe my success and career to Elvis, but there's a little truth in that. Despite quite limited experience, I was hired at my first job as a government tax attorney the day after I happened to be returning with my wife from a visit to Graceland; I walked into the hiring attorney's office and couldn't help but notice a giant portrait of Elvis on his office wall along with other memorabilia from the King, which sparked a conversation and I was hired.

The continuing source of my success are the people I work with every day in my office, their children (many of whom are to be found in my office daily), and of course my former law partner, Jean Huff. They have allowed me to shine, they treat our clients with respect and commitment even in the face of challenges, and they generate smiles throughout the day. No one has it better than me.

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