



The Real Lloyd Braun

Lloyd Braun began his career as an entertainment lawyer, but eventually he switched over to the creative side of the business. Since then, he's had a hand in developing some of the biggest hit shows in television history, including *The Sopranos*, *Lost*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Grey's Anatomy*, and *Boston Legal*. He also did a stint as the head of Yahoo's media group, and in 2007 cofounded Berman-Braun, an independent media company. Last fall, UC Hastings law school dean Frank Wu spoke with Braun in San Francisco. Here are edited excerpts from that videotaped discussion.



Lloyd Braun



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Legally Speaking is a series of in-depth interviews with prominent lawyers, judges, and academics, coproduced by *California Lawyer* and UC Hastings College of the Law.

Q: Let me start with a question you may have heard before: Why can't you be more like Lloyd Braun? Which was the same question that a character on the very popular television show *Seinfeld* was asked and who, not by coincidence, shares your name.

I used to represent [Seinfeld co-creator] Larry David, who is a very close friend of mine. In fact, he's been a close friend for 20 years, and I have the pleasure of playing golf with him almost every weekend, which is quite an experience. Anyway, one day he wasn't playing up to his potential, and he wanted to quit. I think it was on the 14th hole. So I said, "How about I give you a stroke or a hole or something, and if you win I'll buy you dinner anywhere in Los Angeles. And he goes, "What do I care if you pay for my dinner?" So I said, "Whatever you want," because I'm never going to lose to him. But then I hit the ball out of bounds on the 18th hole. Which, by the way, on this particular golf course is impossible to do. And he beat me. Six months later my office phone rings and he says, "Remember the bet?" I say, "No, what bet?" He goes, "You know, the

bet. We're shooting the show and I'm using your name." Anyway, to make a long story short, the reason you only hear the character referred to as "Lloyd Braun"—it's never "Lloyd" or "Mister Braun"—is because every time they do the character, he's sticking it to me.

You graduated from UC Hastings, then went into entertainment law. Why entertainment law?

My father was a very, very prominent music lawyer in the '70s and '80s. So I grew up in that world. But it was very tough to get a job in the entertainment business then—even with connections. So I ended up going to a firm for a couple years as a corporate lawyer. Then after two years I ended up applying to this small boutique firm that had already rejected me twice. But as it so happened, the very day I applied they had to let go of one of their newly hired young associates because they found out that he had falsified his résumé. So I think they said, "What the hell, we'll give this guy a chance."

As part of the job, by the way, my task was to look at all of the X-rated videos that *Playboy* was creating

because at that time the laws were quite different and there were certain things you could not show in those videos—which is no longer the case, *I am told*. Anyway, I would spend hours on end billing my time, reviewing these videos. And I'm thinking, "This has got to be destroying my brain." I could not believe that this is what I was doing out of law school.

Eventually you stopped being a lawyer and moved over to the creative side of the business. How did that happen?

Well again, serendipity. I was negotiating a deal with Brad Grey, who is the principal of Brillstein-Grey [a talent agency]. And when the deal was done, Brad took me to lunch and asked me if I wanted to come over there and run his management company, because he had just made a huge deal with ABC to create a television studio.

Before we go any further, I do have a bone to pick with you. There are a lot of television shows about lawyers, including *Boston Legal*, which you worked on. Why are those shows so unrealistic?

Because they have to be interesting.

No one does legal research. No one reviews documents. It's fast cars and witty talk and everyone is having affairs with everyone in the office.

I know, it's true. But would you rather we do it the other way? By the way, cops have the same complaint.

What type of television show do *you* like to watch?

I find my taste has gotten narrower, and narrower quite honestly. I'm not watching a ton of network shows anymore. When I get home from work, I very frequently gravitate to either ESPN or CNN or something like that. But the show that changed my television viewing habits completely was *Downton Abbey*.

I didn't think you would say *that*.

Let me tell you something, there is no guy who can honestly tell me they don't like *Downton Abbey*. Everyone was telling me how great it was, and I know my wife really wanted to see it. So we went back and watched on Netflix. The next thing we knew, we were watching the whole first season in two nights. That's how we're watching television now.

So what do you say to law school students who want to be just like you?

Well, first of all, you shouldn't want that because I've got lots of issues. But seriously, you don't want to become anybody; you want to become yourself, and there's no one size that fits all. I'll tell you what, though: When I was a young associate, it was really interesting to see who made it and who didn't. Because if you're a genius who can't look somebody in the eye and have a normal conversation with them, if you don't know how to talk to a client, if you're never on time, if you don't return phone calls—you're going to fail. These are the sorts of things that so often sink people. I have been amazed sometimes at how, for one reason or another, people come in with a sense of entitlement. Those people won't last two weeks. Not two weeks. 🙄

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