This book is the result of a lifelong attempt to combine my love for the law and my love for business.

In 1965, the year of my admittance to the Bar, our primary concern was becoming better lawyers—technically. The business side was a given. Not only did we assume that we could operate a law office well enough, but we also assumed that there would be plenty of clients, certainly enough for us to earn a handsome income. Today, both premises are under attack. Technology has become a catalyst for major changes in the way we practice . . . and the instrument that allows us to provide our services at substantially lower costs to clients than ever before.

There is a fierce battle to attain good clients who not only can afford to pay our bills but also are more sophisticated and discerning in demanding better quality and better service. At one point, the lead character of the film Network yells, “I’m mad as hell, and I’m not going to take this anymore!” Clients have become more empowered and will not accept shoddy service at a high price. Because clients have more choices today than ever before—and because it is the right thing to do—lawyers must treat clients with respect and must look to provide value to them. Value is defined in terms of the clients’ perception, not the lawyers’. When the client perceives the lawyer is adding value to his or her world, the amount of the fee is almost never an issue.

Marketing and finance are two of the most critical elements of success in today’s tough economic climate. They are the basis for our discussion about law as a business and planning for success. This book is designed to help you—lawyers and law firms, start-ups, solo and small-firm practitioners, fee-based and contingency lawyers—accept the twin principles of planning for the future and running your practices as businesses.

When law firms understand that business success means meeting prospective and current clients’ needs and desires, marketing efforts become buyer-driven and yield specific and measurable results. In particular, firms must be willing to use more sophisticated marketing techniques and respond creatively to market demands—that is, they must focus on improved client relations and service.

The purpose of this book is to guide you in the planning process by addressing selected issues of importance to your success. By identifying goals, creating a marketing plan, and creating a financial plan, you will be
able to look ahead for ways to solve future problems, continue to serve your clients’ needs, and run your practice as a successful business.

While the practice of law has taken on more of the trappings of a business, it is still an honorable profession whose practitioners are helping and caring people seeking to aid clients in distress. When we lawyers act in a more businesslike manner, we tend to be more effective in the delivery of our services, more efficient, and more profitable, all of which benefits both the client and the lawyer. This continues to be my mission in working with lawyers around the country.

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