

# Preface

This book provides a guide to building or refining a family law practice, which represents one of the most unique and challenging specialties in law. It packs a *triple punch* from the standpoint of challenge: Family lawyers must be accomplished litigators, they must understand law and procedure, and they must approach every case as though it were going to trial someday.

Family law combines litigation with accounting and psychology. Accounting plays a role in the vast majority of cases. Family lawyers are called upon to review budgets and financial statements and analyze tax returns. They are also called upon to orchestrate a legal audit of companies and personal spending practices, as well as advise clients in financial planning.

Family lawyers must also be psychologists. Family law cases are typically packed with the most extreme of emotions. The family lawyer must understand the psychology at work in the marriage or in the parenting of children as well as negotiate the treacherous slope of working with clients in extreme emotional pain. Indeed, the family lawyer must find a way to coach people through the worst time of their lives.

The lawyers who turn to family law are those who have the aptitude to understand finances and the interest in people to understand their workings, all while remaining the most astute of litigators. Lawyers who devote themselves to family law can be called the gladiators of the human condition. While the work is most challenging, the professional satisfaction is most profound. No family lawyer will ever forget the hug he or she receives from the client to whom custody of children has been restored. No lawyer will ever enjoy a greater accolade than when a former client introduces you and says, “This is my lawyer. He is my hero because he got my baby back for me.” No other lawyer will enjoy any greater satisfaction than successfully cross-examining an adverse custody expert. No lawyer will enjoy any greater satisfaction than having a man say thank you for guiding him on how to save his marriage and family.

Family lawyers know what it means to level the playing field for a victim of marital abuse and set her free to enjoy an empowered life. Family lawyers,

perhaps more than any other specialty, work in the trenches of the lives of their clients. More than any other occupation, family lawyers change lives for the better in the face of adversity.

Since the practice of family law, by combining litigation and the emotion of family issues, may be the most emotionally draining specialty in law, family lawyers face serious life-management issues. They are challenged to manage their own emotions and the tremendous drain on their energy. For these and other reasons, family lawyers must learn to lead healthy lives or fall victim to hypertension, heart attack, back and neck problems, chemical abuse, and family strife.

This book is written for lawyers at every level of experience who are thinking about starting their own business and specializing in family law. Why would one want to build and manage a practice specializing in family law? Creating your own business creates freedom to:

- come and go as you please;
- create a practice that fits your vision;
- live your own lifestyle;
- hire and fire your own staff;
- create spin-off businesses and ventures; and
- create perks from the practice.

Creating a specialized practice:

- allows you to refine your skills;
- permits you to work in familiar territory;
- enhances your professional representation;
- sets you apart from the masses of lawyers; and
- provides a good living.

This book is dedicated to building and managing a family law practice. It covers topics similar to those in other books on how to start law practices, but the tone, tenor, and content focus on the family law practice. It also presents some discussions that cannot be found in other law practice management books.

I will walk you through the mental and spiritual steps to help you build the courage to go out on your own. I will discuss the mechanics of opening your own office; marketing; hiring and firing staff; dealing with adversity; providing service; billing and collecting fees, and dealing with fiscal management, to name a few. In addition, systems, procedures, protocols, and checklists are discussed throughout the book, and the compact disc that accompanies the book contains extensive appendices. See page 211 for a list of the Appendices referenced throughout this book.