

Prologue

I have been in practice in excess of 40 years. I have been a trial and appellate lawyer since 1980. Along the way, I developed an interest in creating a model pleading or letter every time I did something. When I started my own practice in 1988, it was abundantly clear that I would be using the same pleadings and letters over and over again. To be efficient, I wanted to create pleadings and letters that I could use over and over again with little change. It occurred to me that if I carefully kept track of my forms and procedures, I would someday have a body of work that would allow me to perform every task without “reinventing the wheel.” After 40 years of practice, it seems to me that there is no pleading or letter that I will have to write in the future that I have not written before. I must admit that I have been motivated by a desire to “work smart and not hard,” but I have also been very motivated to provide a service to my clients that was superior. Thus, I have always worked very hard to create model pleadings and letters that would benefit each succeeding client.

As I progressed in my practice, I began hiring associates. I also hired professional business coaches and began to read everything I could read on managing a business. One of the seminal publications for me was *The E-Myth Revisited* by Michael Gerber. This book emphasized the need for every businessperson to learn and understand systems and to learn how to manage people and delegate tasks. I became obsessed with systemizing every aspect of law practice so the same excellent service could be delivered to every client by every staff member. This resulted in systems and checklists.

I have had the privilege during my career of associating with the Family Law Section of the American Bar Association. Along the way, I was invited to serve on the Section Publications board. That board gave me the opportunity and privilege of writing *How to Build and Manage a Family Law Practice*. My experience with that book resulted in the writing of *The Constructive Divorce*, which the GP Solo Section of the ABA published. Some of the forms and checklists in this manual are also in those publications, but it was not the intent of those publications to be form and checklist books. This manual is designed solely to provide as many forms, checklists, and procedures as may be helpful.

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