

## The new art of family law

Your children are not a weapon; your most intimate acts are open to scrutiny; your marriage is over but your life is not. Tough lessons for the toughest of times.



LeeAnn M. Massucci  
Massucci Law Group

Family law attorneys guide shell-shocked spouses through the worst days of what they dreamed would be a life-long relationship – the bitter end. For two decades, I've practiced the art of relationship dénouement. What could be more difficult than the collapse of your family? It can be horribly destructive to children, and couples find themselves trying to untangle lives that have been emotionally, financially and socially entwined. You presented yourself to the world as one-half of a complete unit and now you are fracturing that coupling in a way that will impact where you live, how you live and how you are perceived by everyone who knows you.

For the first time in decades, family law is experiencing dramatic changes as domestic courts adapt to the United States Supreme Court ruling that same-sex marriage is a fundamental right. The constellation of benefits traditionally attached to marriage are finally available to everyone. More people can petition the courts for divorce, same-sex family formation, property rights and spousal support. And, the biggest difference between same-sex and opposite-sex divorce is: nothing. The end of a once happy, loving relationship is heart-breaking no matter what the gender of the person with whom you tried – but failed – to build a life.

Capital Law School colleagues who pursued less emotional career paths often ask me, "How do you handle all that drama?" The answer begins in the line at the license

bureau. My mother, a deputy registrar, owned and managed a license bureau for more than 20 years. She was the rare 1960's small business owner who wore a dress. I watched her with disgruntled customers. No one is happy in line at the DMV, but she usually had people walking out the door with a smile on their face.

My father, on the other hand, had customers grinning ear to ear. A boisterous, bigger-than-life car dealer who survived turbulent times because each customer became a friend. Our house sat behind his dealership and countless times he would call ahead to ask my mother to put on a pot of coffee because he was bringing a customer home to "sit and talk awhile."

Now, I sit and talk to each client who walks through my door. I learned from my parents that if you truly focus on the needs of each individual client, growing a law practice will take care of itself. I also surround myself with a team of good people, all of whom happen to be women. The difference between running a female-owned law firm and a male-owned firm is: nothing. Legal skills and client-focused practice-management transcend gender. Advising a client through a stressful divorce, a joy-filled 'new-age' family formation, or helping them find peace of mind by drafting a Will gives satisfaction to any family law attorney. I'll be happy to sit and talk to you about that, and the coffee is always on.

*This article is intended solely to provide broad, general information, not legal advice. Readers should seek advice from a licensed attorney with regard to any specific legal issues. Statements or opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Columbus Bar Association, its officers, board, or staff.*

## Two local programs strive to diversify central Ohio legal profession

On Aug. 17, the Columbus Bar Association received the Outstanding Diversity Resource of the Year Award. The CBA was recognized for its efforts to diversify the legal profession through the Managing Partners' Diversity Initiative and the Minority Clerkship Program.

In 1987, members of the CBA collaborated to create the Minority Clerkship Program. The MCP has provided opportunities for hundreds of minority law students to gain practical experience in law firms, government agencies and corporate law departments.

Started in 2001, the Managing Partners' Diversity Initiative was a five-year commitment to attract minority law candidates to the city, increase the number of minorities hired out of law school and create an atmosphere that

encourages minority attorneys to advance in their firms and ultimately become partners. Fifteen years later, members are poised to launch the initiative's fourth five-year plan, making it a 20-year commitment to supporting diversity in the region.

"I cannot think of a more deserving nominee for the Outstanding Diversity Resource of the Year than the Columbus Bar Association. This organization demonstrates an unparalleled dedication to researching, identifying and tracking diversity in the central Ohio legal community, and providing high-impact, diversity-related resources and training programs to significantly increase the racial diversity of its ranks," Thompson Hine's Philip Sineneng said.

## Breaking through the noise: Effective advertising and public relations tips for lawyers



Erin W. Hawk  
Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick

Law firms are making greater investments in their business development and marketing efforts to ensure they remain competitive in this increasingly challenging legal market. According to a recent study by the Legal Marketing Association in partnership with Bloomberg Law®, two-thirds of law firms are increasing their emphasis on business development and marketing efforts. While leveraging new technology tools and a greater emphasis on business development tend to dominate this increased focus, firms should not neglect their communications plan that includes a focused advertising and public relations strategy.

To be effective in this competitive legal landscape, lawyers and law firms need to break through the noise and increase their market visibility with current and potential clients, and advertising and public relations can help. These marketing tools help define a firm's brand in the market and create awareness and visibility, which help lay the groundwork for strong client relationships.

With respect to advertising, firms should look for ways to distinguish themselves from their competition, define the core of their brand in a way that is memorable and look for the best platform that will allow them to reach their potential clients on a consistent basis.

New sources of advertising, including LinkedIn and other social networks, provide attorneys with more choices for their advertising dollars. These sources allow attorneys to clearly define their target, test the signs of audience engagement and refine their strategy based on their results more quickly.

Beyond advertising, a comprehensive communications strategy should also include a proactive approach to public relations, which helps firms gain media and community visibility without paid placement. An effective strategy allows you to position yourself and members of your firm as a resource for reporters and look for opportunities to build off current headlines and provide greater insight to their target audience.

### ATTORNEYS AROUND THE BAR:

#### Ashley Oliker | WOMEN LAWYERS OF FRANKLIN COUNTY

Although she's been admitted to the Ohio Bar for less than 10 years, attorney Ashley Oliker has already undertaken several leadership roles within the central Ohio legal community. Currently president of the Women Lawyers of Franklin County, Oliker is also a sustaining member Columbus Bar Association, serving as a board member of the organization from 2014 through 2016.

Oliker is currently a managing litigation associate with Frost Brown Todd in the firm's

business litigation practice group. In this role, she represents clients in administrative proceedings and in state and federal courts throughout the state of Ohio, focusing her practice largely on commercial litigation and other business disputes.

More information on the Women Lawyers of Franklin County is available on the organization's website, [www.wlfc.ws](http://www.wlfc.ws).



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