

Rainmaking in Transition



BY MITCHELL K. KARP

Family law firms are small, usually with one senior partner generating most of the business. So what happens when the rainmaker retires or suddenly is ill? For a younger partner or associate, the results could be devastating. Yet this need not be the case. The time for implementing a "contingency plan," detailing how the firm will survive if anything happens to the rainmaker, is now.

• **Use the "team approach."**

During the first meeting with a client, introduce a junior partner

or associate. Tell the client that the younger attorney will assist in every aspect of the case and will work with the senior attorney to reduce costs. The client can eventually become a great referral source for the young attorney.

• **Follow in the footsteps of a mentor.** Young lawyers should become active in the same organizations as their mentors. They should become board certified, get published in legal periodicals throughout the state and country, and develop expertise and a reputation in a specialized area of the law. Then, local and national media will look to them as a "source" for legal issues. These contacts are invaluable.

• **Talk amongst yourselves.**

Many years ago, our firm hired a management consultant. He

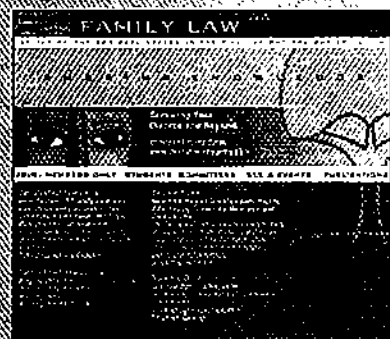
encouraged open discussions. It was fascinating to learn what others wanted for our law firm, from our law firm, and where we wanted our law firm to be ten years in the future. With the consultant's guidance, we defined our short and long-term goals with specific dates for completion.

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Marketing a law practice while practicing law is difficult, yet it is a necessary part of our day-to-day functions. Today, my law partner and I are the "senior partners." We encourage our associates to generate their own business and to become active in "our organizations" as well as in the young lawyers divisions of various bar associations. Of course, as we did, they resist, wanting to devote most of their energies to practicing law. Like our mentor before us, we will persist in encouraging them to develop a plan for the future so that our law firm will continue to thrive. After all, this is what rainmaking in transition is all about.

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