



I'm interested in learning more about how you plan for the future of your practice. Please take a few minutes to complete our [10-question Management Succession Planning Survey](#). I'll share the survey results with you.

I will be arriving in Chicago in the late afternoon, August 23rd. If you would like to join me for a complimentary breakfast on Thursday, August 24th, please [contact me](#). I'd welcome the opportunity to meet you and to learn what challenges are currently facing you.

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## Of Law Firms and Families

No lawyer, even a sole practitioner, is an island. A lawyer's family is inescapably part of the practice equation, throughout a career. Lawyers in solo and small firm practices are particularly vulnerable to stress and burnout because of worry over how to balance income and client demands with the financial and time needs of a family. This is something not taught in law school. But family can be a part of practice decisions in other, less apparent ways, particularly as lawyer and practice reach the end of their natural lifetimes. I received two recent inquiries that brought this point home to me.

In the first, I received a call from the son of a woman lawyer who had just died unexpectedly. The son wanted to sell his mother's practice; but he knew virtually nothing about the practice itself or its clients, including whether his mother had any referral arrangement with another lawyer to take care of clients. He had even less of an idea about who to turn to for help in making the sale, and had not even begun to take his mother's estate, including the practice, through probate. I offered what advice I could, but it was clear that, because of the time pressures involved, the son likely would not realize the practice's true value.

The second example involved another call, from a young woman lawyer

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whose father is a prominent and successful estate and trust attorney in New York. He had been diagnosed with cancer, and had only a brief time to live. His daughter asked if I could help sell her father's practice. I understood her concern but replied that only the father, while living, could decide on practice disposition, but further asked if it was feasible for her to take over the practice from her father. Her reply indicated that this prospect appealed to neither father nor daughter.

These two unfortunate situations illustrate nothing more than the truth that law practice and family relationships inevitably intertwine. This is sometimes spoken of in the context of "work-life balance." In the short term, there is really no such phenomenon as balance - at any given moment the lawyer is doing just one thing, either working or engaging in personal pursuits. The broader perspective is how much cumulative time you devote to each, and what you value more. It is an issue that cannot be ignored, particularly as time demands for legal practice increase and family situations of four generations of lawyers now in practice become more complex. While balance may not be possible, keeping practice and family in separate silos is equally impractical.

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"Ed was coaching me during our firm reorganization when disaster hit! Key personnel departed and I was panic-stricken. Not only did he honor his commitment to 24/7, but his advice enabled me to refocus my priorities. Now, I'm eating, I'm sleeping, and I'm smiling thanks to his guidance."

**KH**  
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Ed Poll, LawBiz® Management

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