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Career Development

From Solo to Synergy: What I've Learned About Building a Thriving Law Practice

Be the person others can count on to execute with precision, clarity and professionalism. That's how you earn trust. And trust is the foundation of any strong referral network.

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Robin I. Bresky of Schwartz Sladkus Reich Greenberg Atlas. Courtesy photo

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When I started my own law firm in 2000, I was a young mom with two small children, a new Florida Bar license, and a gut feeling that said: I need to create something on my own terms. I didn't come from a business background (in fact, I went to law school to avoid math!). But what I did have was a deep respect for the law, a fierce work ethic and a strong belief in making things happen.

After 22 years of building a successful law practice and ultimately merging with SSRGA in New York, I would tell any young lawyer looking to build a practice to, first and foremost, master your craft. Know your area of law cold—inside and out, forwards and backwards. Be the person others can count on to execute with precision, clarity and professionalism. That's how you earn trust. And trust is the foundation of any strong referral network.

The next step? Build relationships, not just a contact list. If you're in a B2B practice, such as I am as an appellate attorney, your referral sources are likely to be other lawyers. In my case, it's trial attorneys. Early in my career, I quickly realized that I needed to go where my referrals were. I leaned into voluntary bar associations—local, state, and national—and sought out leadership roles that gave me visibility and allowed me to give back. Over the years, I've served as President of the South Palm Beach County Bar Association, the Florida Association for Women Lawyers, and the National Conference of Women's Bar Associations. Today, I'm proud to sit on The Florida Bar's Board of Governors, where I contribute to several influential committees. These experiences not only deepened my understanding of the profession—they also became powerful drivers of growth for my practice.

People like to do business with people they like and know. It's a cliché because, well, it's true! But it's not just about what others can do for you—it's about what you can do *for them*. How can you be of service? When you approach relationships with generosity, authenticity, and something to offer, the return is often exponential.

As my practice grew, I realized another important truth: marketing can't be feast or famine. Many new firm owners market heavily to build their book of business, then stop once they're overwhelmed with work. You see the problem here! You do not want to outpace your ability to deliver high-quality legal service, yet you always maintain momentum. That's why hiring support—attorneys, staff, or even business advisers—as soon as it's feasible is critical.

When I started bringing people on, I looked for those who complemented my skills and shared my values. And of course, I turned to the network I had built over the years for referrals. To wit, two of my appellate attorneys have been with me for over a decade. Keeping good people means investing in them—giving them meaningful work, encouraging continuing education, offering feedback, and finding opportunities for them to shine. Let them take speaking engagements. Let them build their own networks. A strong team is essential to a sustainable practice.

Part of building a sustainable practice is developing sound business habits. You can be the most skilled lawyer in the world, but if you don't stay on top of billing and ensure you're paid for your time, your practice will struggle. Setting expectations with clients early helps prevent stress and financial strain down the road. Business skills are just as essential as legal skills to long-term success.

Eventually, I merged my firm with New York-based SSRGA and now serve as managing partner of the South Florida office and as a partner in the firm's appellate department. We still operate with the agility and heart of a boutique firm—but now with the backing and resources of a larger firm. As we look to add more attorneys to our local office, this larger platform allows us to better support and grow their practices.

So, what have I learned in two decades of practice building?

That reputation, relationships, and resilience are a powerful combination. That timing matters—but so does trust. That your work speaks volumes, but so does how you show up for others. And that when you create a practice based on excellence, empathy, and ethics, the opportunities—both personal and professional—tend to follow.

There's no one-size-fits-all playbook for building a law practice. But if you stay grounded in your values, support your people, and never stop growing, your practice will, too.

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