

OFFICE IN A FLASH

BY JUDY L. MARCHMAN

Opening one's own law practice is a dream for many lawyers. Starting a solo practice also may be an economic necessity in the current tight job market. Regardless of the reason, opening a law practice comes with a vast amount of uncertainty.

Building a client base is, of course, the number one concern. How do you best go about that? And once you have clients in the door, what then? How do you maintain a professional attorney-client relationship, and how do you keep your practice organized and running smoothly, whether it's brick-and-mortar or virtual?

The Texas Young Lawyers Association offers a helpful tool in *Office in a Flash* for any lawyer thinking of hanging out his or her own shingle. *Office in a Flash* comes on a flash drive or online at the TYLA website (tyla.org/officeinaflash).

Office in a Flash provides useful information and resources on the key steps any lawyer must take to open a practice — preparing a business plan, determining office space (or keeping it virtual) and technology needs, building a client base, and learning about office and money management. The program's resources can be used by lawyers to best fit their needs at the time.

For **Jane Gekhman**, an attorney with the Law Office of Roger Yale in Denton, *Office in a Flash* proved helpful in late 2010 when she was a newly licensed attorney and also a new mom. She was still looking for a job but decided to work from home in the interim. The document templates on the flash drive quickly proved to be useful.

"When you're first licensed, it helps to have something to refer to," Gekhman said. "I worked from the templates to develop contracts. It was very helpful that I wasn't completely on my own."

While Gekhman has since joined a firm, she is grateful for the practical preparation she gained from *Office in a Flash* before starting with the firm. "It's a good reference tool for new lawyers. Now that I'm part of a firm, going in, it was a good to know what a contract looks like and how to prepare one."

Courtney B. Perez of Courtney Barksdale Perez, P.L.L.C.

and of counsel to the Stafford Law Firm in Dallas, concurs. "It's difficult at the beginning to know what you don't know."

Perez, who opened her law office in September and is a member of the 2011–12 LeadershipSBOT class, found herself asking "where do I start?" She had learned about *Office in a Flash* from the TYLA website and accessed it online. "For me, it had the practical how-to steps starting from square one. It does a good job of answering those initial questions."

Like Gekhman, she found the form templates to be a great resource, and she also used *Office in a Flash* for office space and technology questions. Perez went the office-sharing route, becoming of counsel to the Stafford Law Firm as a way to reduce costs and share resources.

Office in a Flash also points to other State Bar and TYLA resources, including the State Bar Advertising Rules, information on client trust accounts, and Ten Minute Mentor videos. In addition, the flash drive for *Office in a Flash* includes a free

CLE course, "Starting a New Law Office." To request a flash drive, contact the TYLA office at (800) 204-2222, ext. 1529 or tyla@texasbar.com.

"[*Office in a Flash*] was more than I expected," Perez said. "All questions are essential when you are starting from zero. Just having that resource there is very helpful." ❖



The Office in a Flash flash drive



A view of the website