



**M.C. THOMAS**

**& ASSOCIATES, PC**

**A Premier Divorce & Family Law Firm**

# **A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A DIVORCE LAWYER**

**DC Bar PMAS Lunch & Learn Series**

**Michelle C. Thomas, Esquire**

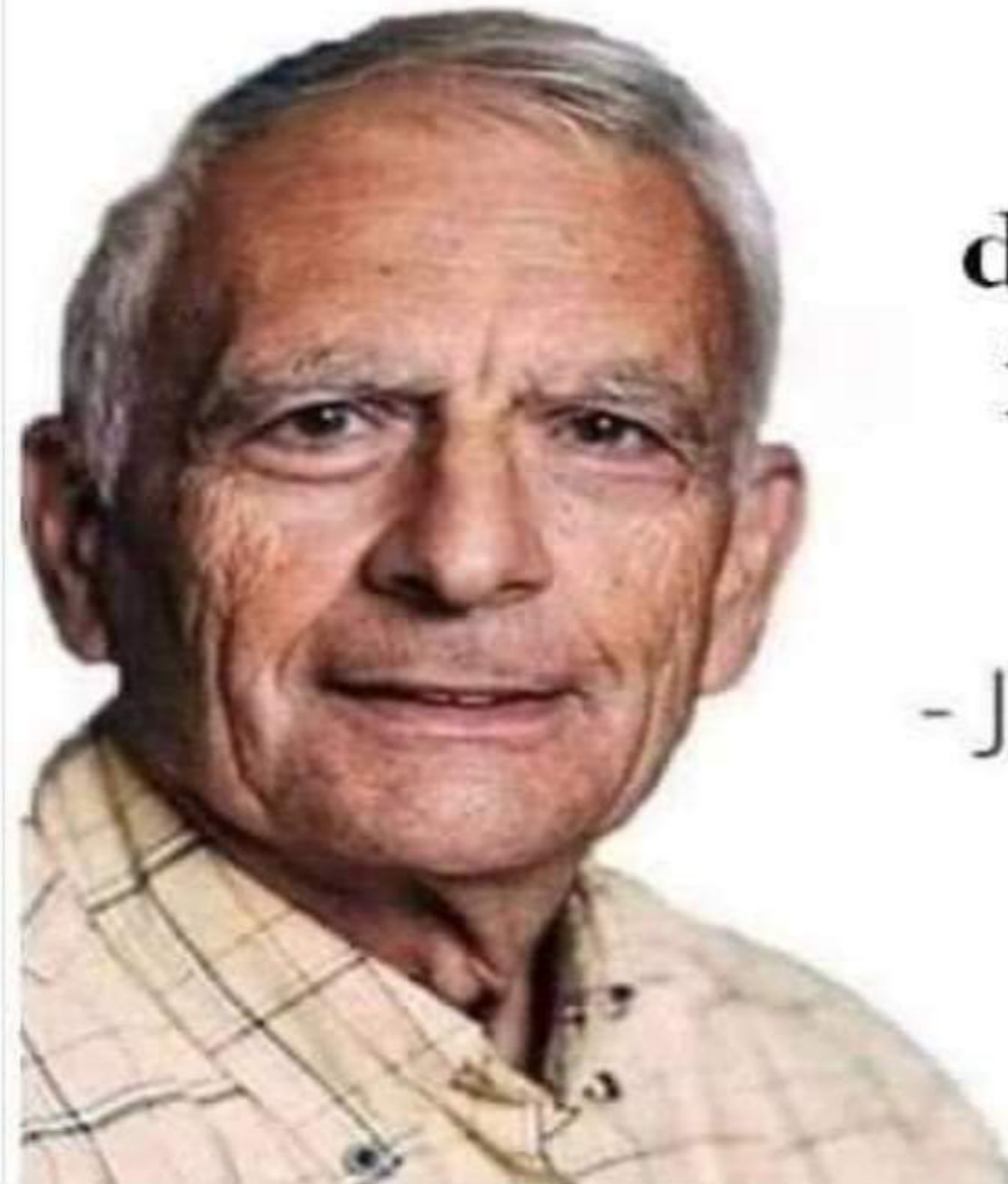
***Founder + CEO + Chief Divorce Strategist***

# TODAY'S TOPICS...

- **A Typical Divorce Lawyer's Day**
- **Nuts & Bolts of Starting A Divorce & Family Law Practice**
- **Case Management Systems**
- **Branding & Business Development 101**
- **Client Management**
- **Common Divorce Practice Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them!**



# SO WHAT IS A TYPICAL DAY IN THE LIFE OF A DIVORCE LAWYER LIKE?



**Being a  
divorce lawyer  
is not all that  
stressful.**

- Jim, 26 years old

# NUTS & BOLTS OF STARTING A DIVORCE LAW PRACTICE

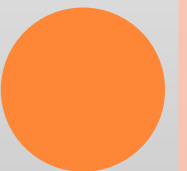
- **Define the Type of Practice and Practitioner  
You Want to Become**

# “BECOMING” A DIVORCE LAWYER

## *ASK:*



- Who do I want to serve? (Preferred clientele)
- What do I want to offer? (Niche)
- When do I want to launch? (Timing is everything!)
- Where do I want to practice? (Sphere of Influence)
- Why do I want to serve them? (Mission/Value)



# NUTS & BOLTS OF STARTING A DIVORCE LAW PRACTICE

- Define the Type of Practice and Practitioner You Want to Become
- **Select Office Location**



# TO HAVE AN OFFICE OR NOT TO HAVE AN OFFICE, THAT IS THE QUESTION!

## VIRTUAL OFFICE

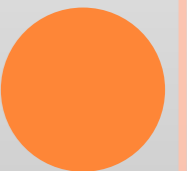
- Low Overhead = Increased Profits
- Flexible Locations
- Light Clerical/Receptionist Assistance Provided (For a Fee!)
- No Ability to Brand Office Space
- “Nickel & Diming” Adds up
- Lit Support Company Needed for Trial Notebooks

## PHYSICAL OFFICE

- High Overhead
- Allows for document production/trial notebooks
- Facilitates Growth/Additional Staff
- Increased Accessibility to Clients

# NUTS & BOLTS OF STARTING A DIVORCE LAW PRACTICE

- Define the Type of Practice and Practitioner You Want to Become
- Select Office Location
- **Build Infrastructure**





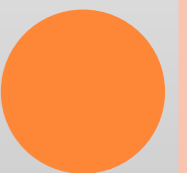
# BUILD YOUR INFRASTRUCTURE BEFORE YOU NEED IT!

- ✓ What computer systems will you use?
- ✓ Is it compatible with your mobile devices?
- ✓ Will you need a Portable Printer?
- ✓ How will you Secure your Files?
- ✓ How will you Backup Data?
- ✓ Have you set up an E-Faxing account? Unless you're a dinosaur, you'll probably need one!
- ✓ What volume of paper do you expect to receive?  
How will you scan and make copies?
- ✓ Did you set up a professional email account?
- ✓ How will potential clients reach you? What telecom system will you use?
- ✓ Did you set up IOLTAs ?



# NUTS & BOLTS OF STARTING A DIVORCE LAW PRACTICE

- Define the Type of Practice and Practitioner You Want to Become
- Select Office Location
- Build Infrastructure
- **Develop Online Presence**



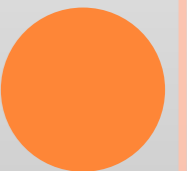
# BUILDING AN ONLINE PRESENCE...

- ✓ **Create a Website** on Wix or something similar, or pay someone do it.
  - ✓ SEO
  
- ✓ **Incorporate Features** to Make Site User Friendly and Increase Immediate Accessibility
  - ✓ Online Scheduling
  - ✓ Submission of Documents
  - ✓ Chat Boxes
  
- ✓ **Social Media Presence** – Who is your Target Demographic
  - ✓ Facebook
  - ✓ Instagram
  - ✓ LinkedIn and More



# NUTS & BOLTS OF STARTING A DIVORCE LAW PRACTICE

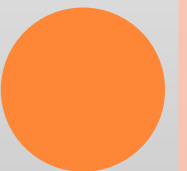
- Define the Type of Practice and Practitioner You Want to Become
- Define Preferred Clientele
- Select Office Location
- Build Infrastructure
- Develop Online Presence
- **Select Case Management System**



# *CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM...*

## **Consider:**

- ✓ Ease of Use
- ✓ Compatibility with Devices
- ✓ Cloud Accessibility
- ✓ Email Management/Tracking
- ✓ Deadline and Rules Tracking
- ✓ Compatibility with Accounting Platforms (ie Quickbooks)
- ✓ Filing System
- ✓ Calendar Management System

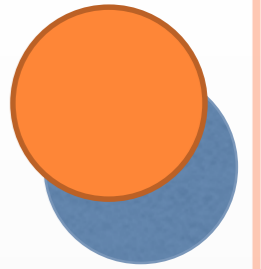


# NUTS & BOLTS OF STARTING A DIVORCE LAW PRACTICE

- Define the Type of Practice and Practitioner You Want to Become
- Select Office Location
- Build Infrastructure
- Develop Online Presence
- Select Case Management System
- **Hang Out Shingle!**

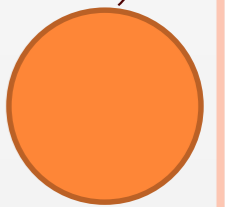


# GROWING YOUR PRACTICE - BRANDING & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

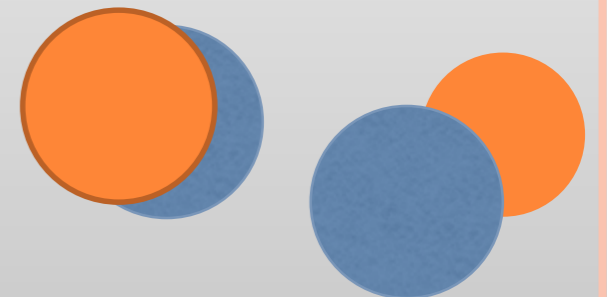


## Defining Your Brand as a Divorce Lawyer

Your Brand is your Promise to the Client. It establishes expectations for the client, court and community in which you serve upon seeing your Name, Logo, Website and YOU.



It distinguishes you from your competition and communicates the characteristics you want the public to associate with you as a divorce practitioner.



# YOUR BUSINESS IS YOUR BRAND

- ❑ Select Colors
- ❑ Develop a Logo
- ❑ Develop a Tagline
  - ❑ *Where Your Family Comes First®*
- ❑ Integrate your Brand
- ❑ Create Brand Messaging
- ❑ Apply Brand/Logo to all Forms and Templates, Stationary and Business Cards
- ❑ Be Consistent
- ❑ Be Great






# WHICH ONE ARE YOU???

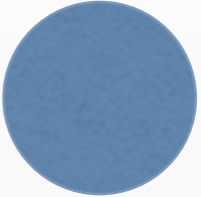



# BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES THAT WORK

*Business Development = Relationship Development*

- Lead Local & Affinity Bar Associations
  - Join Local Chambers of Commerce
  - Engage LinkedIn Thought Leaders
  - Attend Legal and Non-Law Related Conferences
  - Join Entrepreneurial Groups (BNI, Women's eNetwork)
  - Attend Networking Events/Search Meetup
  - Send Thank Yous to Referral Sources
- 

# CLIENT MANAGEMENT...THE KEY TO A HAPPY LIFE

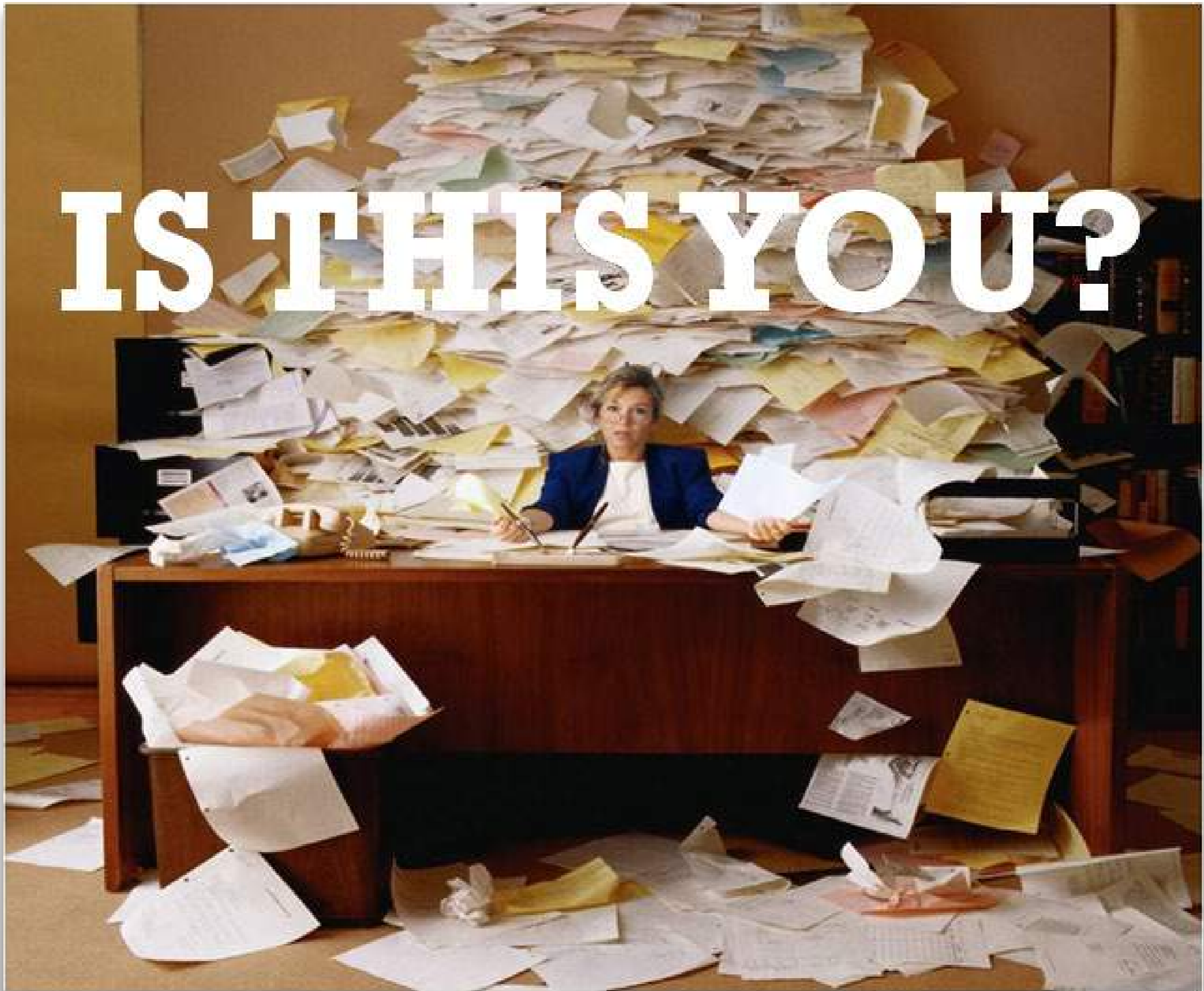
- **Client Selection is Key. Ask:**
  - Do you have any looming court dates? 
  - How many attorneys have you had previously?
  - Do you have an outstanding balance at your prior firm?
  - Why are you changing counsel?
  - What are your goals in this case? Avoid lofty goals 

# *COMMON PITFALLS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM...*

- Failure to Set Client Expectations
- Lack of Client Communication
- Lack of Preparation and Organization
  - [http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/podcast\\_monthly\\_episode\\_110](http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/podcast_monthly_episode_110)
- Failure to Meet Deadlines
- Failure to Timely Invoice Clients
- Failure to Set Boundaries! (Avoid Burnout)
  - <https://lawfirmsuites.com/2015/12/tips-for-avoiding-solo-attorney-burnout/>



**IS THIS YOU?**



# PRACTICE MANAGEMENT RESOURCES

## Starting a Practice

- ❑ *Start Your Own Law Practice* by Judge William Huss
- ❑ *How to Start a Solo Practice* by Hal Davis
- ❑ PMAS – Practice Management Advisory Service

## Legal Reference

- ❑ D.C. Bar's Divorce Practice in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia: Practical Advice and Comparisons (Chart by Sanford K. Ain, Esq.)
- ❑ Maryland Domestic Relations Forms with Practice Commentary by Ann M. Turnbull and Joseph J. Wase

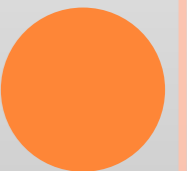


## RESOURCES CONT'D.

- ❑ *Domestic Relations Manual for the District of Columbia* by the Hon. Diane M. Brenneman and Linda Ravdin, Esq.

### Case Management Systems

- ❑ MyCase
- ❑ Bill4Time
- ❑ Clio





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