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## EVOLUTION of the LEGAL PROFESSION



### KEY FEATURES

- Law Firm Perspectives
- Lessons from Leaders
- COVID-19 Trademarks
- Future of Law & Well-Being

### PLUS A BONUS INSERT:

- Trends in the Legal Profession Report



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# One Firm's Story Moving to a **REMOTE WORK ENVIRONMENT**



Photo courtesy of Beverly Funkhouser Photography

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**KANDACE L. SCHERR, ESQ.**, is the managing partner of Frank, Frank & Scherr, LLC, an Elder Law and Estate Planning firm based in Lutherville, Maryland. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Scherr was focused on modernizing the 30-year old firm's operations and administration. The COVID-19 pandemic ultimately accelerated Ms. Scherr's timeline, and pushed her to transition the firm into a mostly remote practice. We sat down with Ms. Scherr to learn a little more about the transition.

➔ **Please describe what challenges you may have faced during the transition.**

To make remote work successful, several technologies and processes had to be implemented. Our next priority was to make sure that all staff had computers, printers, supplies etc. to be able to work from home. We began using services including Zoom, Skype, Docusign, eFax, Dropbox and even stamps.com. We already had a Practice Management Program accessible from the Cloud, but our biggest challenge is that we still have 30 years of physical files. Our dream goal is to work towards becoming a paperless office, and a file review with a scanning plan has been put into place.

While our attorneys and staff clearly miss the camaraderie of being together in the office, we communicate with each other by phone, email, texts and instant messaging. We hold Zoom meetings for the entire staff, unit meetings and individual coffee break calls. We've even brought entertainment into our Zooms including a motivational speaker, meditation class, cooking demonstration and live music. We've had several virtual Happy Hours on Friday afternoons.

➔ **What was the feedback from your clients on the switch to working remotely?**

We work mostly with elderly clients and were surprised to find how much they appreciate having consults by phone, FaceTime, Skype or Zoom. The new laws authorizing remote witnessing and notarizations have been game changers! Clients are so relieved that they don't have to leave their homes to sign their documents.

➔ **What are the biggest factors in transitioning a remote office for the future (Post-COVID world)? Why should other firms consider a remote office?**

Fortunately, our lease is coming up for renewal soon and we are planning either a redesign with downsizing of our current space or a relocation to an office with half the space. All staff want to continue with a 'distributed office', where they can determine how much time they spend in the office and how much time they spend working remotely.

The real benefits of allowing remote work are that staff truly appreciate the flexibility and the office experiences a significant reduction in expenses.

An added benefit is that the use of communication technologies allows us to see clients throughout the entire State, eliminating the need for travel time and physical satellite offices.



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➔ **How do you see your firm and others in your practice area adjusting post-COVID? What are your predictions for the future of the practice area?**

All of our staff agree that having flexibility is a plus and they want to continue even after COVID. We envision continuing with remote consults and document signings.

Elder Law is a much needed area of law and will only continue to grow as our population ages. The pandemic has made people of all ages see the importance of getting their estate planning done.

➔ **Do you have any advice for practitioners that want to make their office remote or downsize their current office space?**

Yes! Get rid of the preconceived notions that clients need to sit with you face to face and that interactions between staff should take place in a physical office setting. A 'distributed office' plan gives staff the flexibility they truly appreciate, and lessening your physical footprint will clearly cut overhead costs. Look into the many technologies out there to help you have a successful remote practice.