



The Game Changers

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AI AND FAMILY LAW - FINDING THE ALGORITHM FOR TRUST



When you hear the words divorce or separation, what comes to mind? Marriage breakdown; a fight for custody; court battle. Lots of negativity, right? While the [total number of divorces in Australia has been declining](#), for those considering a break-up it doesn't have to be a stressful process. In fact, according to Siobhan Mullins from family law firm [Separate Together](#), more and more couples are separating with minimal conflict involved.

"When it comes to separation, people have become more sophisticated in terms of what they want and need."

Having practiced in family law for the past 6 years, Siobhan has seen a dramatic change in the needs of separating couples and believes this shift is getting lost in the traditional law firm structure.

"Some people can't afford to have lawyers do it all for them, and more importantly some don't want them to."

It was this changing need that prompted Siobhan to start her own practice a year ago.

"I spoke with a client who had come to a mutual agreement with his wife, and that they wanted to come and meet with me just to get it formalised," says Siobhan. "I had to say no because my then employer's policy was that we don't see joint separating couples together because it is deemed a conflict."

"But this request got me thinking; what must it be like for individuals and couples only considering a separation and being faced with the problem of not knowing where to start, and then deciding that the whole process is too hard and too complicated particularly when a lawyer is involved."

It was out of this experience that Siobhan decided to start Separate Together – an online family law firm that services the whole of Australia, looking after the micro niche market of couples capable of or who have reached an agreement together, using a lawyer to finalise the paperwork.

And so, at 27 and unhappy at her current workplace, Siobhan saw an opportunity to take the leap and start her own business.

"I've always wanted to help people in a meaningful way and while I was doing that to an extent, it was all about the billables and less about the client's needs," says Siobhan.

"I gave myself 6 months to have a go, backed myself financially, and framed it in my head as an attempt at success – and if it didn't work, at least I would be more marketable than before."

Siobhan believes her new way of practicing, and being unique and different is a real strength for her firm. When asked about whether she would consider her approach an innovation, Siobhan agreed wholeheartedly.

"I see innovation as doing something different and that adds value," says Siobhan.

"For me, it's about coming up with ideas that fulfil my client's needs – even if it's internally and simply improving your processes. Being able to streamline a process and operate more efficiently is so beneficial to our service. In the end, our clients just want a timely, affordable outcome."

By combining her experience and qualifications in family law, with the efficiency of artificial intelligence, Separate Together has become one of Australia's leading online family law firms helping couples to navigate the legal process of separation with minimal stress and expense.

"Personally, I think the way that traditional lawyers practice is dying," says Siobhan.

"That is impart to the growing possibilities with technology and automation. Eventually these changes are going to undermine the traditional law firm

business model, because things are moving online and taking away the need for direct contact with a lawyer."

Having designed a menu of online services tailored to the needs of the client, both financially and personally, Separate Together offers: (1) a 'DIY' service where clients can do some of it themselves and make it official by following the step-by-step instructions; (2) a 'Hold Your Hand' service where the firm can review the documents and finalise the process; and (3) the traditional 'We'll Do It For You' service for those who want someone else to organise it all for them.

"Our clients are looking to be more involved now days; they're going online, doing their research and are willing to put in some of the effort themselves. They don't need a lawyer to do it all for them anymore."

"By having different service options, clients can not only choose the service that suits their budget but also their different needs."

And when we asked Siobhan about her plans for the future? To change or reinvent the separation process across all of Australia.

"I have three firm values; one is to lead, one is to make a difference and the other is to build relationships. I want to lead the family law professional to embrace change and find new ways of helping our clients through the separation process.

"I want Separate Together to be the first point of contact for those couples looking for help with their amicable separation."



About Lighthouse Business Innovation Centre

Lighthouse has a strong track record of supporting entrepreneurs, researchers and inventors on the path from concept to commercialisation. Since July 2008, Lighthouse has worked with over 990 distinct enterprises and provided group and peer based services to over 3400 enterprises and individuals. For

over five years Lighthouse has successfully delivered business advice, education, mentorship and networking opportunities to help these businesses commercialise their ideas and grow their companies. Lighthouse also delivers programs such as the ACT Microcredit Program for the ACT Government. Visit www.lighthouseinnovation.com.au for more information.

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