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## Taking action key to family law success in the new decade

By Jerome Doraisamy | 05 March 2020



Building relationships, leading from the front and creating a lasting impact are the best ways that family lawyers – particularly emerging practitioners – can achieve success in the 20s, says Siobhan Mullins.

Siobhan Mullins, the founder of Canberra-based boutique Separate Together, told Lawyers Weekly that her firm's values centre on leading, building relationships and creating impact. These values, she notes, are key for success in the family law space moving forward.

"In today's climate, the focus is largely on the court intervention system, which services a minority of separating couples. This leaves room for new exciting, innovative ideas and ways to practice and deliver family law legal services in the ADR space to help even more people," she said.

Ms Mullins – who last year won the Family Law category at the 30 Under 30 Awards and Sole Practitioner of the Year at the Australian Law Awards – said such innovative and forward-thinking approaches will be crucial in the coming years for family lawyers, in light of looming challenges on the horizon in this space.

“Technology and the increasing market demand for ADR (thereby changing the traditional business law firm revenue model) will mean that firms will hire fewer lawyers,” she argued.

“We’ll see practitioners start their own family law firm but do so lacking the fundamental basic skills, understanding, nous, legal experience and all that goes with providing a quality family law legal service. Consequently, these practitioners won’t be able to offer the complete and remarkable solution to their clients which means that the clients suffer.

“They may feel out of their depth and being a solo hero takes work. It’s by no means an easy feat, so there is the challenge of managing one’s own mental health too.”

As a result, the “only way” for family lawyers to achieve success and effect meaningful change is for them to take action, Ms Mullins surmised.

“Creating a regular habit of critical thinking and reflection time to understand, change and improve on the existing assumptions and belief systems in the family law space and in one’s own day-to-day practice will mean goals can be set with these new insights,” she posited.



“Acting and outputting content that is consistent with the goal will create change on a micro and potentially global scale.”

When asked what advice she would offer to emerging practitioners in this space, she said: “Do the hard yards, be mentored by a senior lawyer, take initiative and always seek to ask and understand ‘why’ – why this strategy? Why would or wouldn’t we say X or do Y?”

“Compile a list of the top 100 problems your ideal client faces. You can only solve your clients’ problems by creating meaningful solutions after this exercise. Too often family lawyers especially start with the solution of getting their client “the best deal” in their eyes but isn’t always what their client values most or wants solved,” she suggested.

Moreover, part of taking action involves ensuring that you put your hand up for recognition from your peers at events such as the upcoming 30 Under 30 Awards.

“This is an opportunity to reflect on your last 12 months – what you did well, what worked, areas for improvement and going forward, what you would do differently,” she said.

“This reflection time and insight [are] invaluable in [helping you] become a better lawyer and on the plus side, you never know, others may determine you worthy of being named a finalist or winner too!”

To buy a ticket to this year's Lawyers Weekly 30 Under 30 Awards, click here

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