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Consulting firms lend McIntyre Panzarella a hand

Law firm exudes happiness

Premium content from Tampa Bay Business Journal - by Jane Meinhardt, Staff Writer

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TAMPA — It is not surprising that **Richard McIntyre** does what he does.

He is the founder of a successful Tampa law firm with a very focused practice — representing debtors and handling insolvency issues.

His professional focus came sort of naturally. Both his parents are lawyers who have the same type of practice. His brother does, too.

"I just like representing the debtors' side rather than the creditors'," McIntyre said. "There are a lot of issues when you represent debtors."

The preference for bankruptcy and related cases has paid off for the firm.

McIntyre Panzarella Thanasides Hoffman Bringgold & Todd PA has racked up a 75 percent increase in annual revenue over the past three years.

The firm's business model is fairly simple. McIntyre gathered like-minded lawyers — ones with experience handling real estate law, foreclosure defense, lender liability, criminal

problems and all the other issues that can crop up with businesses and other clients in financial trouble.

The firm is a kind of self-contained, one-stop shop.

"We brought together enough firepower to get clients back on the right track and provide what they need," McIntyre. "We can cover the spectrum."

Startup had dollars, people

When he left **Trenam Kemker** after 12 years to start his own firm in 2006, he took a couple of lawyers with him. He sold some real estate he had invested in to finance the startup.

The firm outgrew its first office in six months. Today, the firm has 14 lawyers, which fits into the business' strategy.

"I like this size," McIntyre said. "You know everybody pretty well."

The firm has expanded geographically in the past year or so, adding an office in Sarasota and Fort Myers.

McIntyre has attracted lawyers he wants, not really hunted for them, and the firm was ready when the booming economy hit the skids — although that readiness was not exactly planned.

When the economy declined, the firm experienced a resulting business upsurge that has not faltered much. While some firms ended up cutting their stables of lawyers, McIntyre Panzarella Thanasides did not.

"It's just been a series of fortunate events," McIntyre said. "We've never had to downsize."

Consult, billing choices work

The firm is basically an hourly billing business, but it has been flexible and embraced project compensation and other billing alternatives needed by clients, he said.

McIntyre has kept the firm in growth mode by consulting with an external chief financial officer type of consultant who helped guide billing, vendor and other decisions.

McIntyre also has consulted with **Vistage International**, a San Diego-based member organization that provides access to chief executives and business leaders for ideas, advice, peer group sessions and mentoring.

"It's like having an external board of directors to help you make decisions about business issues," McIntyre said. "It makes all the difference in the world."

The firm's growth had been 95 percent fueled by referrals from the legal arena, accountants and other financial services. The only marketing is through the firm's presence on the Internet, he said.

Law firms that have a particular specialty and have become known for that often don't need overt marketing, said **Jeff Coburn**, a Boston-based management consultant for the legal industry. Instead, they can use community and bar association activities as a way to expand awareness of their expertise.

"The more in-depth the expertise, the less overt marketing is needed," Coburn said.

McIntyre believes one of the things helping his firm grow is simply that the area legal arena recognizes he and others in the firm like what they do.

"We've always had a busy practice," he said. "Growth comes when you like what you do."

INFO

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