



CANNON LAW FIRM

IT'S ABOUT MORE THAN BEING THE BEST LAWYER

By Dan Baldwin

A BUSINESS APPROACH TO BETTER SERVICE

“My personal mission is to run a good business. It’s essential to think of your practice as a business and a business focused on customer service,” says Chad W. Cannon of Cannon Law Firm, serving Parker and Palo Pinto counties from offices in Mineral Wells and Weatherford.

Cannon believes that good business practices are key elements in providing the services clients need. “You’d be surprised at the number of attorneys I’ve been around who don’t focus on the business aspect of practicing law. I’ve never understood that attitude,” he says.

Cannon is an AV rated attorney practicing primarily family law, criminal law and personal injury. Cannon says, “When you’re in a small town, my experience is that you’re going to have to take just about everything that comes through the door. I’d say

our practice is about 40 percent family, 40 percent criminal and 20 percent personal injury.”

He earned his Juris Doctor in 1998 from Texas Wesleyan, now Texas A&M School of Law in Fort Worth. Prior to that he had earned a football scholarship to Abilene Christian University where he attended from 1990 to 1991. He transferred to Baylor University, continued to play football until 1993, and graduated in 1994 with a Bachelor of Arts in business administration.

A SMALLER MARKET AND A BIGGER OPPORTUNITY

Cannon began his legal career working for a firm in Dallas for a time, but eventually he tired of the big city lifestyle. One of his father’s friends knew a practicing lawyer in Mineral Wells and suggested that he meet with the attorney, talk things over and see what he thought about setting up a practice in a smaller

community. The attorney, Michael Burns, was originally from Mineral Wells, but had been practicing in Corpus Christi for some years before moving back north. He had established a sound practice before the two attorneys met for that discussion.

“When Michael and I met, he suggested that if I was serious about wanting to get into private practice in that area that I office with him where I could help pay his overhead and take some of the extra cases he had at the time. That situation worked out well for both of us.” Cannon says.

At the time, Cannon was living in Arlington. He began making the commute for the first year just to make sure the arrangement was going to work and it was going to be as sound a proposition as both men believed it to be. Cannon says the opportunity turned out to be a very good deal. After a year of commuting, Cannon and his wife Alicia (an assistant district attorney in Tarrant County) made the move to Weatherford in Parker County.

Another reason for making the move was Burns’ plans to run for district attorney which would mean he would only be in private practice for about another 12 months. The thought was to go ahead and office together, get to know the court system, become familiar with the surroundings, and then take over the clients Burns had at the time he became district attorney and that’s what happened.

Cannon brought in an associate, Josh Norrell, about a year ago to assist with his growing case load. Both Cannon and Norrell, assisted by paralegal Shanna Mello, are enthusiastic, aggressive and willing to take on cases that others might not want to handle.

Referring to an old television commercial in which children are faced with trying out a new breakfast cereal, he says, “For me it’s something of a ‘Give it to Mikey; he’ll eat anything’ situation. That’s been good for our business. They know that we’re aggressive and certainly willing to take on something that’s complicated or challenging. We seem to get several of those cases and for us that translates into good, solid work and for the client it translates into somebody that wants to do it and is able to do it and so I think it’s a win/win situation. We get a lot of referrals from other attorneys and from the county attorney who is a family attorney in town.”

He notes that the firm handles six-figure personal injury cases – cases that other attorneys in town choose not to take on.

“That ability provides a competitive edge. Norrell also does a lot of appellate work. His background is in appeals, which is another area some lawyers in the counties either aren’t familiar with or prefer not do that kind of work,” Cannon says. “Consequently, the firm has the capabilities of handling any trial through all levels, including the Texas Supreme Court, if necessary.”

AN EFFECTIVE BUSINESS MODEL

“In my mind what separates me is that I’ve created a good business model and for me it’s not about who can “out-lawyer” another person. It’s about creating a solid business. If you’re going out on your own you have to ask, ‘How am I going to be successful in the business place?’”

Because of Cannon’s athletic background and his love of sports, he also has another business venture in which his legal skills are put to use as a sports agent. He and his partners (one in California and one in Florida) formed C&N Sports Group as a boutique sports agency. Currently, the firm represents eight players in the NFL and 15 other players in minor league baseball. “One of the main reasons I went to law school to begin with was to be a legal representative for professional athletes. It’s taken me a lot longer than I anticipated, but I’m getting closer with the clients we’re now able to get.” Cannon says. “And although there is some travel involved, I am able to negotiate sports contracts while living and practicing law in Parker and Palo Pinto Counties. It’s very rewarding to be able to help young, talented athletes achieve their dreams of playing professional sports.”

Again, his focus on his business model is a key element in his ongoing success. He says his background in business at Baylor University and having an entrepreneurial spirit allows him to determine ways to make the practice of law a successful business.

Success is more than just being a successful lawyer, he says. “We have to stick with the basics. When someone calls you, call him back. When someone has a question, try to answer it. Try to be responsive. Treat people the way you would want to be treated if you went into someone’s store. If you keep that in mind and actually do those things, you will be rewarded immensely through word-of-mouth and people saying, ‘Hey if there’s an issue, go see Chad. He’s a nice guy and he took care of me. This guy will sit down and talk with you. Spend some time with him.’”



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