



WALLACE LAW

Mobile commercial lawyer offers experienced and affordable legal solutions to small and medium-sized businesses.

BY SCOTT LESLIE
The Business Link

Moira Wallace is an expert at reading between the lines, and in her line of work, she has to be. Moira is the owner and proprietor of Wallace Law—a commercial law practice in Hamilton that provides legal advice and consulting services to small and medium-sized firms throughout the Golden Horseshoe.

"I'm in the business of helping companies better understand and manage their legal issues," she says simply. "It's my job to help find and create loopholes that will protect my clients and their businesses."

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Moira deals with all kinds of clients, whether it's manufacturers, distributors or retailers—one or 100 employees. Her range of legal services includes contract drafting and negotiation, mergers and acquisitions, public and private procurements, employment and labour matters, lease management and negotiation, policy and procedure development, incorporations, joint ventures and partnerships, corporate finance and security, regulatory compliance services and risk management services. As a Notary Public in the Province of Ontario, Moira can also provide notarization for various legal documents.

Moira takes great pride in offering legal services to the small business community.

"I'd never dreamed of opening my own law practice," she explains. "But after a lot of research, I realized there was a great opportunity in the mar-

and her MA in Legal Studies. During that time, she began to get interested in environmental concerns and developed her Master's Thesis on the history of environmental law in Canada and the need to protect the environment. In order to begin practicing law, Moira pursued her LLB at the Windsor Law School where she volunteered at a legal aid clinic and contributed many environmental articles to the school newsletter.

Following her graduation, there wasn't much work to be found in environmental law. As a result, Moira began articling and practicing law at Cassels Brock & Blackwell LLP in Toronto. Here, she found that working in the litigation field didn't have the same allure as Jennifer Parker's life had. But she did find herself more and more intrigued by corporate and commercial law.

"Drafting contracts is just like solving puzzles,"

tor of Legal Affairs with Wolseley Canada Inc.—a global distributor of HVAC, plumbing, PVF and industrial supplies—where she dealt with leases and employment matters.

A New Direction

When the recession hit in 2008 and Wolseley had to make a number of cutbacks, Moira found herself

out of work and at a crossroads. Unfortunately, local in-house counsel opportunities were nonexistent at the time. And she had no desire to go back to the Bay Street environment.

"When I was working on Bay Street, I noticed the kinds of hours the women partners were..."

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"When I was working on Bay Street, I noticed the kinds of hours the women partners were putting in... They never had any time for their families, and I didn't want to commute to Toronto or go back to that lifestyle. *It was important for me to find the right balance in my life, work and family.*"

Pictured above: Moira and her daughter Cailyn

ketplace. I'd noticed that smaller companies often need business legal solutions but can't afford the high costs of most law practices. Now with Wallace Law, I can offer them a viable alternative."

A Wealth of Experience

Born and raised in Hamilton, Moira has harboured a desire to become a lawyer ever since she was back in Grade Six. At the time, she began reading Sidney Sheldon's novel "Rage of Angels" and was taken by the book's heroine, Jennifer Parker—a New York lawyer that used her wits and intelligence to solve challenging cases. Moira was particularly attracted by the way Sidney Sheldon portrayed the life of lawyers, and that convinced her to pursue a law career.

After taking a few law classes in high school, Moira attended Carleton University in Ottawa where she obtained her BA in Law and Russian,

Moira explains. "The client has a certain picture in mind and you need to figure out how to fit all the pieces together."

Working in the firm's commercial finance department, she spent the next two years negotiating loans, security, subordination and priority agreements on behalf of medium and large lending institutions. She also helped to prepare various aircraft finance and purchases, commercial lending and shareholder agreements.

Looking to move back to the Hamilton area, Moira decided to take on a new challenge with American Water—a water and waste water treatment corporation—as Corporate Counsel in 2001. With American Water, she was responsible for the firm's legal affairs, taking care of everything from environmental issues to drafting and negotiating RFP contracts to collective bargaining agreements. By 2006, Moira had taken on the position of Direc-

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...putting in,” Moira says. “They never had any time for their families, and I didn’t want to commute to Toronto or go back to that lifestyle. It was important for me to find the right balance in my life, work and family.”

Instead, Moira decided to strike out on her own and become an entrepreneur. After refining her business plan through the 36-week BizSmartz Self-employment Program, Moira launched a new mobile law practice—“Wallace Law”—in September of 2009. With her new practice, Moira has created a niche market for legal advice.

“I go by the title of ‘Chief Loophole Advisor,’” she explains. “That’s because I love to find loopholes in documents that will help my clients. It’s not about evading compliance with the law and avoiding liability. It’s more about understanding my clients’ businesses, protecting their interests, and finding ways to limit their exposure to risk from a holistic perspective so they can grow and prosper.”

Unlike a conventional law practice, Moira operates a “temp” law service, coming directly to the client’s business to work with them and doing any remaining work from her home-based office. With her mobile service and low overhead, she can offer the experienced legal advice of a traditional law

firm on-demand and at a more affordable price than having an in-house legal counsel.

For over a decade now, Moira has been involved in all aspects of the legal profession. But she takes great pride in offering a different approach to law. For instance, Moira finds a touch of humour always works wonders when she’s dealing with a client.

“Some people are intimidated when they’re dealing with lawyers,” she explains. “But I go out of my way to be make things easy and understand-

“I don’t want clients to feel that the meter is running when they’re talking to me. *I’m not a typical lawyer that bills people for every minute or piece of advice.*”

able for my clients. I make it a point to be friendly and approachable.”

One thing that people find intimidating about lawyers is their expensive fees. That’s one of the major differences between Wallace Law and traditional law practices. For instance, Moira doesn’t bill her clients for expenses like commuting, and will charge at fifteen minute intervals rather than the more expensive six minute intervals of large law practices.

“I don’t want clients to feel that the meter is running when they’re talking to me,” she explains.

“I’m not a typical lawyer that bills people for every minute or piece of advice.”

With her more reasonable rates, Moira can provide overflow legal support to companies that are dealing with an over-burdened legal department, a hiring freeze or a limited budget.

Looking Forward to a Challenge

As a long-time Hamiltonian, Moira has always been passionate about her community. She is cur-

rently involved with several business and community organizations including the Rainbow’s End Community Development Corporation, the Facilitating Inclusion Cooperative and Roaring Women. In addition to acting as director at the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, she is also a member of the Canadian Bar Association, the Ontario Bar Association and the Canadian Corporate Counsel Association.

Moira always looks forward to her next assignment. She particularly enjoys helping out busi-

nesses that have been wronged in some way. According to Moira, business owners often run into problems because they fail to bring a lawyer in at the onset.

“They’ll go ahead and do something like sign a contract without consulting a lawyer first,” she says. “Unfortunately they’ll make mistakes and have to pay all the expense of getting things fixed. That’s when I’ll step in to help and say ‘this is what you need to do.’”

Moira’s clients have always appreciated her strong sense of loyalty and commitment. She will rarely say “no” to a project or challenge. To Moira, that desire to help others in need is automatic—and makes all the difference in the world when it comes to dealing with her clients.

“I’m always looking out for their best interests,” Moira says. “At the end of the day, I want them to know I’m there for them.” **BL**

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