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Partners in Love and Law – Top Ten Tips for “Couples in Business and Bed Together”

Allison S. Tabor, CPC, CPSM | Feb 01, 2012 | [Comments 0](#)

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Allison S. Tabor, CPC, CPSM

From courtroom to bedroom, couples in the legal profession are making it work together.

Law school not only helped produce great lawyers; in some cases, love partners. Other legal practitioners found themselves *in Love and Law* later in their careers. Some have decided to hang a single shingle and combine their law practice.

The reasons for combining practices vary. For some it is a way for partners to spend more time together, perhaps due to one partner's unemployment, or the partners wanting to work with someone they know, or with whom they share common goals.

One in five businesses is run by a couple, according to Business Week, and more couples than ever are going into business together. In large part, this trend is due to the weakened corporate economy and the aging of America. Add to that, there is a growing interest in having a balanced family and work life.

Working together can be exhilarating, fulfilling, and challenging! Sharing excitement, inspiration, support and the pursuit of a common lifestyle change are just a few of the advantages. Many couples in business together find that one plus one equals three. By combining, they become three; “you, me, and now us”.

Successful legal love partners are enjoying many benefits; however, success in love and life together in the legal profession comes easier for some than others. Why? Hopefully, I can help to answer that question. Whether you are considering working with your spouse or already are, you can benefit from reading my, “*Top Ten Tips for Couples in Business and Bed Together*.” I share these tips with the hope that you will find success in business and life as partners in *Love and Law*. So, happy *lawyer-ing* and loving together!

Tip #1 Have a Shared Integrated Vision

A great place to begin is by developing a clear vision that has both partners heading in the same direction toward common goals. Why do you want to work together? What does your ideal business and relationship look like? The more in sync you are with each other, the greater chance for success. Key things to include are: roles and division of responsibilities, your plan for resolving conflicts, working/personal schedules, time off expectations, risk tolerance, compensation, distribution, and reinvestment of profits into the business, and ending a partnership. By having a shared vision and a mutual understanding of expectations, you will increase your chance of success together.

Tip #2 Create a Partnership Agreement

They say doctors often make the worst patients. To that, attorneys understand better than most, the significance of managing expectations through the use of agreements. Every couple in business should have a common sense agreement. The agreement should incorporate the couple's vision objectives.

Tip #3 Set Healthy Boundaries

As a couple both in business and at home, it is inevitable that the role each plays can get confused at times. Conflict spillover between the roles can be problematic and have an adverse effect on the business and personal relationship. Setting and respecting boundaries is key to enjoying a harmonious relationship, both at home and work. There are no hard and fast rules. Rather, what is important is to have a mutual agreement as to “what works and doesn't for each of you” and respect the boundaries established. Some couples find it helpful to create a code word or phrase they use to help constructively attract their partner's attention when they may be crossing a boundary.

Tip #4 Work at Home Consideration

In some cases, one or both partners may be working from home. Under such circumstances, the boundaries between work and personal can cross quite easily. Some partners prefer not to bring in or discuss work at home, while others enjoy it. The most important thing is that both partners agree on how work communication will be handled at home. If you have a home office, it can actually be helpful to create a designated space for work and keep it separate from personal pursuits. Consider the use of decorative room dividers where walls are not an option.

Personally, we had an off-site office location and I preferred that work not be discussed at home. It was important for me to have some down time, turn work off and enjoy quality time with my spouse. My husband and I agreed that, if we wanted to keep the romance in our relationship, we would have to separate work from home as much as possible. (Business talk at home isn't considered a form of foreplay, as far as I'm concerned). While we agreed to keep work issues out of the home as much as possible, we knew it was unrealistic to think we could never discuss work at home so we agreed on a plan. Whenever we had a work issue needing attention, we would simply let each other know and then reconvene in our home office to discuss and handle whatever was necessary. This worked extremely well for us for over 20 years, but again, the key is in finding what works best for each couple and then honoring it.

Tip #5 Communicate with Understanding and Respect

“He who knows others is learned. He who knows himself is wise.” Lao Tse. Understand, appreciate, and respect your differences, including your communication styles. There are great tools available to help you better understand your communication style and that of your spouse so that you can be more effective in your

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communication. Often lawyers pride themselves on being great communicators. Please remember that being a “good listener” is every bit as important as being able to openly and effectively be a “good talker.” A favorite and effective communication tool that I’ve used for years with my spouse and also with my couples clients in business, is DISC; a personal and professional assessment solution (sample DISC reports are on my website at <http://www.coppiacommunications.com/businesscorporate-teams.html>).

Tip #6 Capitalize on Your Differences

Having different strengths, skills, and styles is an asset. Of course, when you work together, all of the ways that you are different will become apparent. Some of these differences in styles may be welcome, while others may not. Once you’ve learned to better understand yourself and your partner, you can leverage your individual and combined talents for even greater success.

Tip #7 Care in Conflict

“Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional.” Max Lucado. Couples in business can expect their fair share of healthy differences of opinion; however, your business will require that they be resolved quickly, effectively and constructively. Any conflicts should be resolved in private, maintaining a united front to customers, employees, and business partners. Otherwise, your credibility and effectiveness will be diminished.

Tip #8 Be Flexible and Forgiving

Equally important as having clear understandings, considerate communication, boundaries and strategies, is being flexible. Adapting to changes in circumstances is a necessary skill for any business owner, but even more so when dealing with your life and business partner. The same is true for making mistakes. Mistakes, whether your own or your partner’s, are learning opportunities. Treat them as such, without blame. Forgive yourself and your partner for the inevitable mistakes that you will make.

Tip #9 Have Fun

The legal professional can be serious; working together can also be intense at times. Celebrate being a couple at work. Remember to lighten up and regularly make time for fun! Not only is fun, sex, and romance necessary for a healthy personal relationship, it makes the business more personally rewarding.

Tip #10 Integrate Resources

There is a great deal of information available to help Couples in Business succeed. Commit to embrace helpful resources as part of your personal and professional development together. Just a few relevant books include: *In Business and In Love*, by Chuck and April Jones, *Couples At Work*, by E.W. “Dub” & Janet James, *Couplepreneurs*, by Jean R. Charles and *Sleeping With Your Business Partner*, by Becky L. Stewart-Gross, PhD and Michahel J. Gross, EdD. Also, while not specific to couples in business, a great book for couples to read is *The Five Love Languages*, by Gary Chapman.

Allison S. Tabor, CPC, CPSM, owner of Coppia Communications, is a Certified Professional Coach and Consultant, who has enjoyed a successful business and family life with her husband for 23 years. With her firsthand business ownership and Couple experience, Allison is a uniquely qualified success strategist empowering Couples in Business and entrepreneurs to achieve greater success in their business and life. You can learn more and subscribe to receive her blogs at www.coppiacommunications.com.

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