

How is Work?

Are you busier than last year? Slower? About the same?

About the same.

Shell Bleiweiss, Illinois and Arizona

Busier. Much.

Partly due to some retirements (other attorneys who practiced in my field), partly due to people getting nervous about their estate plans due to COVID-19, the election, etc. and/or having extra time (due to COVID-19 changes in employment and social activities) to deal with such things.

Cynthia Hannah-White, Hawaii

Slammed. If you are a trial lawyer with good writing skills interested in an established insurance defense practice in paradise, contact me. I'm looking five years down the road to retirement and there are no up-and-comers here that I can look to to hand off my practice. So now I'm thinking that I'm going to have to recruit someone from off-island and get them established in my practice, so that I'll be able to retire.

Andy Simpson, U.S. Virgin Islands

Business picked up for me in August and September but now it's bottomed out again. Things usually slow down for me around this time of year but it's obviously different this time because of the pandemic.

I'm tempted to take Any up on his offer.

Jason Komninos, New Jersey

After a decade in the insurance world, I thought I would never go back, but that sounds like a damn good offer...

Drew Winghart, California

Yeah know I am wishing I had spent a bit less time doing family law work and more PI work over the years LOL.

Erin M. Schmidt, Ohio

I'm still slower, but doing OK.

Cynthia V. Hall, Florida

For that matter, if it's the "paradise" part you like, but you'd rather do probate and trust settlement work, along with some estate planning, you might think about moving out here to Kauai and joining my firm (or hanging your own shingle, though I'd obviously prefer the former and there is a path to partnership or taking over in 12 years or so).

The cost of living here is high, but there are ways to make it work.

Cynthia Hannah-White

Busier. Much busier.

Low interest rates have kept the real estate market hopping (which is completely out of the ordinary for this area, as the market has been relatively stagnant for years). Folks who were penned up together for too long are looking for divorce/child custody actions. I have also written a ton of estate plans. Not complaining - but I could use a break!

Marshall D. Chriswell, Pennsylvania

On the whole, definitely busier than this time last year. On a daily or weekly basis, some weeks are totally quiet.

CA bk attorneys are all waiting for the following:

- The forbearance/loan mod/deferral situation to be figured out either in the debtor or creditor's favor
- The January 1 increase in the homestead exemption
- The March landslide of COVID-19 rent cases (those have started trickling in)

Say hi to your bankruptcy attorney friends now. We'll be too busy to chat in the Spring. Well, not me, because I believe in a proper work/life balance, but most of my colleagues.

Corrine Bielejeski, California

January, two attorneys.

April, three attorneys.

August, four attorneys.

October, five attorneys.

Now I am a managing attorney.

Art Macomber, Idaho

I am finding more than the usual number of tire kickers in my estate planning practice. It's like nobody has the focus to follow thru. Some even make the down payment and then ghost. Others have a great consultation (by phone or Zoom because of the plague) and promise to send a check with the info I need. I sent the engagement agreement and they never respond again. I follow up a few times and then set the file aside.

I'd say the percentage of those who don't follow thru is up about 300% this year over previous years.

Anybody else finding this in estate planning? Real estate, my other bread and butter, has been all over the map. But there's a definite pattern in estate planning.

Meg Tebo, Illinois

My bankruptcy related business is up 16% over my year to date figures from 2019. Couple that with all of the cases I've managed to settle before and during the shelter in place and I'm having a pretty good year.

Of course, I'm spending much more on marketing and SEO, but at least I'm getting calls.

Geoff Wiggs, California

Meg, my EP is down, now some of this is normal summer into fall slowdown, we have bunch of snowbirds that go up north during the warm months, and this COVID-19 stuff has kind of disrupted the usual migration back (people are afraid to travel). And some people simply aren't willing to meet in person at this time.

Ron Jones, Florida

Our EP practice is crazy busy because of COVID with people nervous and working from home so they have time to deal with it. I have done more wills and trusts in the last 7 months than we did in a year and a half before that. If anything, I'm exhausted and getting burnt out as I'm in the five, 6 or 7 days a week.

I am doing the intake meetings by Zoom. I gone to a flat fee a la carte menu. Basic docs (will, poa, health proxy, living will HIPAA Release) are \$X, trust is \$Y, funding trust is \$Z per account, etc. They are sent a detailed questionnaire when they schedule the appointment. Engagement letters are done via DocuSign within 24-48 hrs of meeting.

Peter Clark, Massachusetts

Family law. Lockdowns. Need I say more? It's like after the holidays, folks realize they don't want to live with these people anymore. Or they realize life is short, they don't want to be married to this person anymore.

Plus, with the courts closed for a while, I didn't have my normal pipeline of closing cases while opening others. It wasn't a one to one ratio, but it was close enough that I kept a decent balance. Now I have open cases that SHOULD have closed months ago, plus new cases coming in. I am actually closed to new cases unless referred by another attorney or former client. Not accepting "I googled family law and your name came up."

Elizabeth Pugliese, Maryland

Meg—funny because I was thinking about this a few days ago. As you said they've paid a large amount but have gone AWOL. I'm currently trying to decide how/whether to nudge them along.

Julie Mills, Ohio

Meg, I'm having a similar experience. The incoming calls and referrals have increased over last year, and I'm thankful for that. But some of these folks are having a hard time finishing what they start. It seems like the realities of this pandemic have pushed

them into at least taking a first step and realizing they need a Will or a full estate plan in place. But then they see the questions before them of what decisions need to be made, and they say "oh, this is a lot" or "oh...I need to think about this some more," and they go back under their procrastination shell.

JB Hilliard, Georgia

Yes, I am having the same issue. When I met people in the office, they signed the retainer, and gave me a check then the next appointment was set to sign the document, only a few ghosted me (maybe 2 or 3 over years), now I have a bunch that call to reschedule signing (must be in person).

Frustrating.

Martha Jo Patterson, California

To the EP folks - my EP friend started giving her clients' deadlines. You must do X by Y date. If you don't do that, I am closing your file. That has seemed to work for her, although she has had to walk away from some of the clients who paid but wouldn't do the follow up work. Like some of you, her practice has been crazy busy this spring and summer, so she had to find some way to free up room in her pipeline for clients who will pay and follow through with the paperwork.

Corrine Bielejeski,

Corinne—that is the logical, maybe “best practices” thing to do but I just can’t bring myself to do it. Maybe because we had the hardest time designating people for our estate plan. One expensive special needs trust plan has just one minor thing left and it has stalled since August though, which is ridiculous. I might have to set deadlines.

Julie Mills
