



The Business Side Of Law: JoLinda Herring Of Bryant Miller Olive On 5 Things You Need To Create Or Lead A Successful Law Firm

An Interview With Eric Pines



An attorney should always be thinking about:

How you can help your clients (be a connector)

Create a business plan for your practice (review it often and determine if you are working in accordance with your plan)

Don't be afraid to ask clients for a referral (especially if you have done a great job for them)

Make sure that your team is included in some of your practice decisions (without staff and team members you will never be successful)

Don't let money drive every decision (enjoy what you do)

Law school primarily prepares lawyers for the practice of law. But leading or starting a law firm requires so much more than that. It requires the entrepreneurial skills that any CEO would need to run a business; How to manage personnel, how to hire and fire, how to generate leads, how to advertise, how to manage finances, etc. On the business side of law, what does an attorney need to know to create a successful and thriving law practice? To address these questions, we are talking to successful law firm principals who can share stories and insights from their experience about the "5 Things You Need To Create Or Lead A Successful Law Firm".

As a part of this series, we had the pleasure of interviewing JoLinda L. Herring, Esq.

Ms. Herring is the CEO and Managing Shareholder of **Bryant Miller Olive PA**. She originally joined BMO as a law clerk in 1994, and upon admission to The Florida Bar in 1996, she began as a practicing attorney with the firm. Most recently, Ms. Herring served as co-chair of BMO's Public Finance Group, as well as chair of the firm's Board of Directors. In 2020, she was appointed to the National Association of Bond Lawyers (NABL) Board of Directors, and she is a member of the Board of Trustees at Fisk University. Ms. Herring's practice is dedicated to municipal law, governmental tax-exempt financings and blue sky securities law, with an expertise in commercial paper programs.

Thank you so much for joining us in this interview series! Before we dive in, our readers would love to "get to know you" a bit better. Can you tell us a bit about your 'backstory' and how you ended up where you are? Specifically, we'd love to hear the story of how you began to lead your practice.

Initially, during undergraduate school, my goal was to become a doctor. However, I was burnt out by my senior year. I received an MBA in Finance and worked for a family-owned construction company for a period of time and decided that was not for me. So I went to law school, and I have really enjoyed the practice of law. With my business skills, I have always wanted to lead and I was appointed Co-Chair of the Public Finance Group at BMO. I served several times on the Firm's Board of Directors and really showed an interest in the business side of the firm and was elected to CEO and Managing Shareholder in 2021.

I'm a huge fan of mentorship throughout one's career. None of us are able to achieve success without some help along the way. Who has been your biggest mentor? What was the most valuable lesson you learned from them?

I was very fortunate and was able to have two mentors — one inside the firm and one outside the firm. Randy Hanna, a former BMO Managing Shareholder, hired me as a law clerk and offered me the position as attorney. His main advice was to learn the technical side of the business and become an expert in Public Finance. He told me that the clients would come after I became an expert, and he was right. My outside mentor was Harold Knowles and he taught me how to persevere, even when it seems like the situation is difficult.

From completing your degree to opening a practice and becoming a business owner, your path was most likely challenging. Can you share a story about one of your greatest struggles? Can you share what you did to overcome it?

One of my greatest struggles was being heard in a room full of men. I overcame that by being over-prepared for each meeting and learning to speak authoritatively or saying, "I will review and get back to you."

Can you please give us your favorite "Life Lesson Quote"? Can you share a story about how that was relevant in your own life?

"Be willing to work harder than the next person." That is advice that was given to me when I started my career, and I took it to heart. Most people do enough to get by and nobody wants to do the grunt work. I always stay late and I do the assignments that no one else wants to do. But I became an expert in those areas.

This is not easy work. What is your primary motivation and drive behind the work that you do?

My primary motivation and drive is seeing that I am helping people. In the Public Finance area, we help local governments finance projects, such as water and sewer systems, roads, community centers, parks, and other economic development projects. For some communities, a new community center and park mean the world to their citizens.

What are some of the most interesting or exciting projects you are working on now?

We are working on affordable housing projects in Broward County. Those projects will allow people of low income to realize their dream of home ownership or have an affordable rental unit.

You are a successful attorney. Which three character traits do you think were most instrumental to your success? What unique qualities do you have that others may not? Can you please share a story or example for each?

The three character traits I believe that were most helpful are: perseverance; detail-oriented; and self-confidence. I believe that I can conquer anything.

Do you think where you went to school has any bearing on your success? How important is it for a lawyer to go to a top-tier school?

I attended Florida State University College of Law and I believe that I am as good or better than anyone that attended an ivy league school. Where you went to school may have some bearing on your success, but ultimately, it is how hard you focus on goals that really makes the difference.

Managing being a law practitioner and a business owner is a constant balancing act. How do you manage both roles?

Practicing law is the easy part. It is managing people that can be challenging sometimes. However, I generally spend my late afternoons through early evenings on managing the firm. It also helps that we have a great COO.

Can you help articulate the entrepreneurial skills a lawyer needs to run and lead a successful law firm?

The entrepreneurial skills required are 1) understanding business and finance, 2) understanding how to motivate people, 3) knowing when to stop pushing so hard, and 4) having empathy and compassion.

As a business owner you spend most of your time working IN your practice, seeing clients. When and how do you shift to working ON your practice? (Marketing, upgrading systems, growing your practice, etc.) How much time do you spend on the business elements?

I spend about 25% of my time on the business elements. That also varies by the situation and the crisis of the day. We have great staff that helps with IT, marketing, human resources, budgeting and other areas. So, I spend most of my time delegating and setting expectations. I trust each person to do the job they were hired to do.

Can you share some specific, non-intuitive insights from our personal experience about how a leader of a law firm should:

- **Manage personnel:** Be cognizant of their concerns and give them a voice.
- **Hire and fire:** Hire slowly and fire quickly.
- **Generate leads:** Participate in your community. People need to know how to help you.
- **Advertise:** Outsource to a professional marketing firm.
- **Manage finances:** Be conservative on spending.

Ok, thank you. Here is the main question of our interview about the business side of law. What are your 5 Things An Attorney Needs To Know In Order To Create A Successful And Thriving Law Practice. (Please share a story or example for each.)

An attorney should always be thinking about:

1. How you can help your clients (be a connector)
2. Create a business plan for your practice (review it often and determine if you are working in accordance with your plan)
3. Don't be afraid to ask clients for a referral (especially if you have done a great job for them)
4. Make sure that your team is included in some of your practice decisions (without staff and team members you will never be successful)
5. Don't let money drive every decision (enjoy what you do)

You are a person of enormous influence. If you could inspire a movement that would bring the most amount of good to the most amount of people, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger. :-)

It would encourage every high school and college student to get a financial education while they are seeking their academic education. Being able to save and invest money can really change your life.

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This was very inspiring. Thank you so much for the time you spent with this. We wish you continued success and good health!

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About the Interviewer: Eric L. Pines is a nationally recognized federal employment lawyer, mediator, and attorney business coach. He represents federal employees and acts as in-house counsel for over fifty thousand federal employees through his work as a federal employee labor union representative. A formal federal employee himself, Mr. Pines began his federal employment law career as in-house counsel for AFGE Local 1923 which is in Social Security Administration's headquarters and is the largest federal union local in the world. He presently serves as AFGE 1923's Chief Counsel as well as in-house counsel for all FEMA bargaining unit employees and numerous Department of Defense and Veteran Affairs unions.

While he and his firm specialize in representing federal employees from all federal agencies and in reference to virtually all federal employee matters, his firm has placed special attention on representing Veteran Affairs doctors and nurses hired under the authority of Title. He and his firm have a particular passion in representing disabled federal employees with their requests for medical and religious reasonable accommodations when those accommodations are warranted under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (ADA). He also represents them with their requests for Federal Employee Disability Retirement (OPM) when an accommodation would not be possible.

Mr. Pines has also served as a mediator for numerous federal agencies including serving a year as the Library of Congress' in-house EEO Mediator. He has also served as an expert witness in federal court for federal employee matters. He has also worked as an EEO technical writer drafting hundreds of Final Agency Decisions for the federal sector.

Mr. Pines' firm is headquartered in Houston, Texas and has offices in Baltimore, Maryland and Atlanta, Georgia. His first passion is his wife and five children. He plays classical and rock guitar and enjoys playing ice hockey, running, and biking. Please visit his websites at www.pinesfederal.com and www.toughinjurylawyers.com. He can also be reached at eric@pinesfederal.com.