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Righi Law Group

Cost-Conscious, Streamlined Approach Keeps Law Firm Ahead of the Pack

By Ben Norris

Righi Law Group has made a name for itself by scrapping convention and looking at new ways to solve clients' legal issues. Founding Partners Rick Righi and Beth Fitch launched the firm two years ago, at the height of recession, knowing the economic climate would play a major role in how they approached the practice of law.

During a time when many businesses simply don't have a budget to deal with drawn-out litigation, Righi Law is finding new ways to streamline processes and resolve cases at a lower cost. The firm practices primarily in construction law and defect litigation, insurance defense, commercial transactions, commercial litigation, and personal injury.

"Initially I went into the practice of law because it was all about winning," Fitch said. "I like that part of it, but over the years I've learned it is not only about winning, but client satisfaction. When clients come to us, we work with them closely to understand their legal and business needs. With that clear understanding we then strive to find the optimal solution to best meet those needs."

With flexible fee structures, streamlined litigation and a results-focused approach, the firm has built a reputation for efficient and creative resolution. Today, the Righi Law Group continues to grow through increasing referrals and word-of-mouth buzz. The growth was built on cost-effective solutions and an innovative approach to litigation. For example, the firm recently obtained a \$2,000,000 settlement from an insurance company at virtually no up-front cost for one of its construction clients. Another

"We mean it when we say we are client driven," says Righi. "We're in business to put clients in the best position possible. It's their case, not ours. Clients want a lawyer to come in and respond to their needs and come up with creative solutions."

creative cost saving measure for a client was to consolidate three litigated cases into one mediation. This resulted in substantial savings to the client.

"It used to be easier to say: I'm a trial lawyer - hire me because I can try your case," Righi said. "Nowadays, that can turn potential clients off because they perceive a firm as being focused on scorching the Earth and trying cases. Trying a case is expensive. But generating that kind of expense is not our mission."

Clients today are more guarded and want to hire a firm that's conscious of cost restrictions. Righi says his experience successfully trying more than 60 cases is as much an asset to serving his clients out-of-court as it is battling in front of a Judge or Jury.

"We welcome the opportunity to help clients recognize the risk of going to trial and come up with strategies to resolve cases quickly," Righi said. "Clients are approaching us with a different mindset. They are more cost-conscious than ever before and don't want to go down the traditional litigation path."



Melissa Lin and Rick Righi... down to business.

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A Defined Path for Client Success

Fitch says clients want to be more involved in their case from beginning to end, and a successful case outcome is built on collaboration between the firm and client at every level. The Righi Law Group uses four pillars in their practice, a set of guiding principles.

Innovate: This step is the first and perhaps most important, Fitch says. It means recognizing changes in the business landscape and finding creative solutions for clients during tough economic times. Advanced case management, document control and use of communication technologies help the Righi Law Group keep costs down for clients.

Involve: The important decisions are not made by the attorneys alone, but through collaboration with clients, outside experts and accountants. This is a break from the traditional model, one in which the attorney is a trusted counselor making important tactical decisions. At RLG, the goal is making the client's role a more proactive one. While clients can still count on their attorney for counsel, their

lawyer is as much an advisor and advocate. Clients are given room to evaluate and manage the risk associated with their case.

Simplify: Fitch says it's important to the firm to make complex legal principles understandable for clients, giving them the information needed to make decisions on their own. The nuances and legal issues surrounding commercial law, construction and insurance can be overwhelming for clients when an attorney doesn't take time to explain the process in understandable terms. At Righi Law Group, clients are not left in the dark.

Resolve: Righi Law Group prides itself on being a results-driven firm with a focus on resolution from day one. While cases sometimes run long for any firm, Fitch says quicker, effective resolution is always the goal. That means attacking a case on two fronts: positioning clients for success at trial, while working toward an early resolution that could keep them out of the courtroom altogether.



Chris Begeman

Solid Business Training and Collaboration

Fitch is a third-generation Arizona native who comes from a long line of entrepreneurs. From an early age, she embraced the notion of one day running a business. She earned an accounting degree from Arizona State University, where she also obtained her Juris Doctorate.

“My great grandmother travelled from Italy to Prescott by boat and then by train with her 4-year-old daughter in tow, and immediately launched a dairy farm. Her daughters then partnered with my grandfather and his cousins to build a dairy farm and ranching dynasty in the Verde Valley and Prescott. My dad and his two brothers continued on with this ranching tradition but also started a number of other successful businesses.” Fitch said. “Growing up with this rich entrepreneurial history, it never really occurred to me to go into anything other than business. I chose accounting because the rigorous curriculum helps to develop critical thinking skills and provides the best foundation for analyzing business operations. I still use accounting principles all the time to understand complicated financial transactions that are often at issue in complex litigation.”

While Fitch started her career arbitrating and trying personal injury cases throughout Arizona, her interest in business led her toward the realm of commercial litigation. She has successfully handled the entire gamut of complex tort and business disputes ranging from catastrophic injury to sexual harassment to construction litigation.

A cowgirl through-and-through, Fitch grew up in Prescott. Her father and uncles are ranchers and she never backed down from the hard work of herding cattle, branding and shipping.



Beth Fitch

“Cowgirls have a certain attitude, a bit of mental toughness,” Fitch said. “Ranching looks glamorous, but it’s hard work. There’s something very rewarding about rolling up your sleeves, digging in, and persevering through the dirt and grime of a cattle ranch.”



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Michael Minnaugh and Jalana Commerford onsite reviewing blueprints.

It’s a mental toughness Fitch uses every day as a lawyer. Whether a case is heading to trial or mediation, it takes perseverance and leadership to guide clients down the right path and manage a group of attorneys.

Righi has been practicing in commercial litigation since 1996. Since then he has represented contractors and businesses in tort and contract litigation in the areas of construction defects, complex litigation, product liability and insurance bad faith.

While his trial experience has made him a sought-after litigator, Righi also shines outside of trial. He’s a mediator and arbitrator, and those mediation skills have helped him achieve success for his clients and the firm.

Righi grew up in a Midwestern family and embraces the same competitive and innovative spirit that drew Fitch into law. Having that in common has allowed both attorneys to stay on the same page and move the Righi Law Group forward with a solid vision and client-centered approach.

Looking Ahead With Core Values Intact

The Righi Law Group recruits the most talented attorneys from various genders and backgrounds. From the beginning, Righi and Fitch sought out associates from diverse personal, professional and ethnic backgrounds to provide a depth of experiences and skills. To continue the trend of strategic growth, Righi and Fitch will continue offering the resources and technology their

At a Glance

Primary Areas of Practice Construction Law and Construction Liability

- National builders and insurance companies
- Local and regional builders, owners, contractors and subcontractors
- Lenders, design professionals, sureties and material suppliers
- Construction Defect Defense
- Payment and performance disputes (Arizona Prompt Pay Act)
- Collection matters
- Surety bond claims
- Lien Foreclosures
- Registrar of Contractors administrative proceedings
- Defective products claims
- Job site safety
- Green Building and Sustainability

Insurance Defense

- Construction defect
- Professional liability defense
- Business comprehensive general liability
- Personal Injury
- Product defect
- Business Torts
- Bad faith and first party liability

Commercial Transactions and Litigation

- Resolution of business conflicts
- Proactive conflict resolution aimed at avoiding costly litigation
- Proactive Risk Management and Contract Formation
- Mediation and arbitration experience

Contact

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Rick Righi giving convincing arguments.

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staff need to resolve cases as efficiently as possible with the costs to clients always in mind.

While the firm has watched itself grow rapidly over the past two years, growth for the sake of growth isn't part of the plan. Righi and Fitch believe growth comes naturally when a firm seeks out top, diverse talent willing to think creatively and cost-consciously for the benefit of clients. Chris Begeman, who has been with the firm since its inception, agrees: "The partners practice what they preach. We are encouraged to think outside the box and to keep abreast of new laws, technologies and methodologies that might help us to better serve our clients."

Fitch says the firm will continue its tradition of collaborating with clients while building relationships with outside professionals. Working with accounting professionals, insurance brokers and other business experts is crucial in developing new strategies and solutions.

"We mean it when we say we are client driven," Righi said. "We're in business to put clients in the best position possible. It's their case, not ours. Clients want a lawyer to come in and respond to their needs and come up with creative solutions. The traditional model has the lawyer manipulating the process and our approach is just the opposite. We put clients first. We always have."