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LAW FIRM BUSINESS

## Quite the Catch

A blossoming romance inspired a business litigator and a family lawyer to join forces, resulting in a nimble — if somewhat peculiar — Los Angeles boutique.

By Ryne Hodkowski  
Daily Journal Staff Writer

Reuben Raucher & Blum PC is an unusual marriage of talents. For one, the nine-lawyer, Westside firm focuses on business litigation and family law. Founder Timothy D. Reuben said he and his colleagues weren't aware of another boutique with that combination in Los Angeles.

In addition, Reuben and partner Stephanie I. Blum married in 2006.

The two were dating in December 2004 when Reuben asked Blum to join the firm and bring her family law practice with her.

"We were dating at the time, and that's the reason the conversation even happened," Blum said. "It wasn't as if he was looking for a family law practitioner to round out the practice."

"If you told me 10 or 15 years ago that I would have a family law practice, I wouldn't have believed it," Reuben said. "But you have to take advantage of good opportunities that come your way."

Blum now has access to civil litigators for anything that may come up in her matters, an uncommon luxury for attorneys at boutique firms that practice strictly family law.

"Family law will have complex valuation issues, big assets or disputes in complicated areas," Reuben said. "Stephanie can easily access business litigators who do that stuff as a matter of course."

The two practices can also be complementary, in that clients often have more than one need over time, leading to intra office referrals.

"Stephanie has had clients who have needed help with other matters, and we've been able to generate substantial business for our business litigation



Partners at Reuben Raucher & Blum use their uncommon marriage of family law and business litigation to their advantage.

section from the family law practice," Reuben said. "The benefit of constantly working together is that Stephanie has developed greater business litigation sense, and we have better family law awareness."

Reuben started the firm in 1992 with only a paralegal and a secretary. He said that even as a young attorney, he dreamed of working in a small firm where people had close relationships and could work together. Reuben initially didn't plan on staying independent very long, thinking he would merge with another firm. But he said he soon found that operating his own practice was "too much fun" and ended up overseeing a "quick expansion."

"We always go up and down between nine, 10 and 11 attorneys — that feels good to me," Reuben said. "We can have meetings where we're all in the same room. There's a certain point where if you get to around 20 attorneys or more, it becomes harder to deal with everything."

The firm counts Reuben, Blum and

Stephen Raucher as partners, and it has six associates. While hiring lawyers straight out of law school is an unpopular prospect for many firms, Reuben said his firm actively pursues recent graduates.

"We'll hire some people laterally, but we've found that they might come in with bad habits. We prefer to train people ourselves," Raucher said.

Raucher himself was a second-year associate when he joined in 1994. Reuben said his colleague "was able to turn out brilliant, well-written, incisive papers like a machine."

Reuben said that having an associate-to-partner ratio of 2-to-1 makes the most sense for the firm. Such a breakdown, he added, gives the firm more flexibility in staffing matters and results in smaller client bills.

It also means younger associates are getting more practical experience earlier in their careers than they'd get elsewhere.

"If I can send someone younger to court or to a deposition or any proceed-

ing, I try to do it," Reuben said. "That's going to be more cost-effective for the client, and the younger attorneys then get the opportunity to handle matters and interact with the clients and senior attorneys more than they would at another firm."

The firm also prides itself on handling appellate work. The lawyers said that while that's not unique for a business litigation firm, it is unusual for a family law practice. As a result, the firm is more likely to appeal a family law decision than others that focus on such matters.

"In the family law arena, there seems to be a real division between trial level work and appellate work," Raucher said. "A lot of trial family law attorneys aren't comfortable arguing appeals."

The firm has been doing appellate work since it opened its doors, but Reuben said it's always striving to do more.

"We're not a firm that runs away from complex legal issues, we embrace them," he said. "It's one of the great experiences a lawyer can have — speaking about issues of law with judges and justices."

Reuben said he's also proud of the firm's practice diversity. Intellectual property, real estate and entertainment are just a few of the matters it's handled, despite labeling them generically as "business litigation."

Because they aren't pigeonholed into one practice, the attorneys say they look at each case with "fresh eyes," which allows them to more efficiently work with opposing counsel to reach a solution.

"We'll say we want to do it a certain way, and the other side will say, 'It isn't done that way,'" Raucher said, "when in reality, there's no reason for it not to be."

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ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Reuben Raucher & Blum is a litigation boutique in Westwood. The firm's practice focuses on trial and appellate work including business, real estate, construction, intellectual property, entertainment, insurance, unfair competition and family law, including custody, support and valuation.