



*The Women's Bar Association
of the State of New York*

presents

*Convention 2026
Continuing Legal Education Series*

**Establishing, Operating, Growing, and
Thriving Through Law Partnerships**

May 30, 2026
1:30 pm - 3:00 pm

Presenters: D. Jenny Kim, Esq.
Megan Rha, Esq.

Establishing, Operating, Growing, and Thriving Through Law Partnerships

May 30, 2026

Megan Rha, Esq. & D. Jenny Kim, Esq.
Rha Kim Grossman & McIlwain, LLP



Two are better than one

“

“The strength of a business partnership lies in the ability to adapt, innovate, and evolve together.” -Anonymous-

“The best partnerships come from people who have their own interests and talents, yet actively understand, remember, and appreciate each other’s interests and talents.” -Heidi Reeder, author-

“A friendship founded on a business is better than a business founded on friendship.” -John D. Rockefeller-

“It takes two flints to make a fire.” -Louisa May Alcott-

Most Partnerships Terminate Within Several Years



THE STORY OF OUR LAW PARTNERSHIP

2007-
Shall we
partner?
Why not?



Lawyering,
Growing,
Mothering



Taking Risks
Hiring & Firing
International &
Interstate



A Brief Third Partner,
Diversification of Cases
& Other Valuable
Lessons



Growing
Through the
Zombie Days of
COVID 19



- New Partners
- New Headquarter
- New Areas of Concentration



Strategies & Best Practices



Strategies & Best Practices Continued





Entrepreneurship & the Practice of Law

Effective Partnerships Help Us Do Both Well

The freedom to fear, wonder, dream, investigate

The positive, energized default voice

Amassing opportunities

Leap, flop, fly, launch again

Lastly, lawyer
partnerships are
RELATIONSHIPS,
and that means we
got to work at them



Questions & Comments

Thank You for Your
Participation!

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Long-Lasting Attorney Partnerships - Strategies and Best Practices

Rha Kim Grossman & McIlwain, LLP

I. Before Partnership Checklist

Level of Motivation and Hunger

- What motivates each partner to start or stay in this business?
- How much does each partner need to earn to make this a viable source of income for them?
- Is this business/partnership each partner's main source of income?
- How many days per week and hours per day is each partner willing to invest in this partnership, and will that time be compensated separately from profits?
- What life stage is each partner in (their commitments and responsibilities outside of the partnership)?
- How important is the success of this partnership/business to each partner?

Financial & Business Alignment

- Have we agreed on capital contributions and ongoing financial responsibilities?
- What are our expectations regarding earnings, profit-sharing, and distributions?
- Do we agree on how budgets and expenses will be handled?
- Are we aligned on how we want to grow our business and reinvest profits?
- How will we keep our finances transparent? Will we share regular financial updates?

Firm Operations & Culture

- What is our vision and mission for the firm?
- What do we envision for firm culture and values (teamwork, client service, ethics)?
- How open are we to technological adoption and innovation?
- How will we recruit talent, retain employees, and provide for professional development?
- How will we develop new practice areas?
- How much time will each partner spend developing new opportunities?
- How much time will each partner spend working on cases?
- How will the firm's policies be developed? Who will enforce them and how?
- What are our policies regarding hiring friends and family members?
- What are our policies regarding taking on the cases of friends and family members?
- How will we handle disputes or complaints by clients?

Communication and Decision-Making

- Have we set ground rules for regular communication (meetings, updates, conflict resolution)?
- Do we have a process for major strategic decisions (unanimous vs. majority vote)?
- Have we clarified how to handle disagreements and avoid misunderstandings?
- Is there a documented governance structure (managing partner role, committees, responsibilities)?

Roles, Strength & Leadership Styles

- Do we have complementary skills, talents, and practice areas that add value?
- Have we assessed potential clashes in leadership styles or personalities?
- How can we acknowledge and respect each partner's role and autonomy?
- Have we identified who handles management vs. client development vs. lawyering?

Relationship Building & Trust

- How can we regularly affirm and appreciate each other's contributions?
- Can we listen and let others take the lead when needed?
- How can we share the heavy load (financial, client, admin)?
- How can we practice our commitment to loyalty and trust and avoid territorialism?
- What ways can we celebrate successes and revisit why we are partners?

Contingency & Conflict Planning

- Have we created a written partnership agreement covering withdrawals, dissolution, and disputes?
- Are we clear on dispute resolution mechanisms (mediation, arbitration, court)?
- Do we have a plan for unexpected events (illness, death, misconduct)?
- Do we have a buy-sell or exit agreement in place?

II. During Partnership Checklist

Relationship Building

- Do we allow space for each other to speak and actively listen?
- Have we established mutual appreciation and a shared vision?
- How are we dividing and managing heavy workloads?
- Have we clarified how to handle disagreements and avoid misunderstandings?
- Do we have mutual loyalty and trust, while avoiding territorialism?
- Do we celebrate successes and remind ourselves why we are partners?

Maximizing Strengths, Differences & Complementarity

- What responsibilities does my partner handle that relieve me of certain tasks?
- What concerns does my partner manage so I don't have to?
- What opportunities do I have because of my partner?
- What brought us together in the first place?
- What unique skills, perspectives, or talents does my partner have that I do not?



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Sources and Bibliography

The Thomson Reuters Institute's report, [2022 State of U.S. Small Law Firms: Cause for cautious optimism](#), published with the ABA's Solo, Small Firm and General Practice Division

[2024 Legal Trends for Solo and Small Law Firms](#)

[Growth Management: Moving Small to Mid-Sized Law Firms Out of Start-Up](#)

by: Brian Kennel of PerformLaw - *PerformLaw's Knowledge Base*

Tuesday, May 20, 2025

[Top 10 Challenges of Being a Law Firm Managing Partner](#)

By Wendy Merrill

[Collaboration in Law Firms](#)

Lead Article

From *The Practice* – September/October 2015

The new wave of client service

Heidi K. Gardner

[Law Firm Dynamics: Don't Hate the Player, Hate the Game](#)

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