



Feature

For Divorce Attorneys, Business is Booming

By Anne O'Dell

Between holiday-themed fights and New Year's resolutions to move on, January and February constitute a rush in the divorce industry. But now that the holiday rush is behind us, divorces are still quite prevalent. And coming up next month is what's referred to as the "April effect."



In a recent article in the *Boston Herald*, divorce attorney Sharyn Sooho said, "Any difference you can possibly think about, people will come up with it and have a fight about it over the holidays."

Although most couples will avoid beginning a divorce during the holidays—mainly for their children's sake—many will begin researching attorneys as early as October and November.

Attorneys practicing family law often find themselves in a lull between Thanksgiving and the first of the year.

"We take lots of time off in December, especially during the week between Christmas and [the] new year," said North Carolina divorce attorney Lee Rosen.

"Our phone barely rings during that week"

"Certainly, a lot of people try to hold the family together—especially for the kids—over the holidays," said attorney Hans Hailey in the Herald report.

Hailey continued to say that during the first couple weeks of January, "There's a spike in people coming to see you about wanting a divorce."

"The intake process is crazy in January," said Rosen.

"Most firms take on many new clients during that month and really aren't able to do much of the work until the following month. So, while January is overwhelming with calls and initial consultations, February and March are the months where doing the work causes the overload. Things settle out by spring."

According to Harrison Barnes, CEO of legal job research company LawCrossing, the increased activity in the divorce

industry makes the beginning of the year a great time to hire and be hired in family law practices.

"Of course, many of these firms are always looking for associates," he noted.

"But right now, the demand for skilled divorce attorneys is through the roof. We have around 3,000 firms currently looking for attorneys and legal staff for family law practices."

"I don't know whether [divorcing couples] are waiting to see what kind of present they get," said another Boston attorney in the Herald report.

"For some reason, people think it's important not to start a divorce just before the holidays."

Rosen said, "Some folks find that the holidays don't match up with their Norman Rockwell ideas about family life, and that becomes the last straw. Some find all that family time over the holidays to be more than they can stand, and that leads to action. Some make a New Year's resolution to make a change.

"Many, probably the bulk, wait until after the holidays so as not to ruin the holidays for the children. They might have left in November or December, but decided to hang in for another month or two and get through the holiday period."

Another theory to explain the January/February divorce rush is that signs of an extramarital affair will often appear in the weeks after the winter holidays.

Bill Mitchell, a private investigator and self-identified infidelity expert, writes in his blog, "During the 3 to 5 weeks after Christmas, anyone who suspects infidelity can find telltale signs confirming an affair.

"Cheaters often leave signs of an affair. You just need to know where, when, and how to discreetly look for them. Often, Christmas gifts and behaviors expose the affair."



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Mitchell said these signs can include “discovered” gifts, especially such items as lingerie and jewelry; gifts from co-workers that are accompanied by a very affectionate message, such as “I knew you would love this”; thank you notes for gifts of which the spouse was not aware; and suspicious receipts for gifts, restaurants, and/or hotels.

He also said that spouses should take note of inadequately explained or unexplained absences and suspicious phone calls during this time.

Mitchell, who says his methods are based on the Reagan-era credo “trust but verify,” said, “There’s no reason why this concept can’t be considered in a relationship, especially in today’s culture.

“Is it wrong to question your spouse’s behavior? No, certainly not, especially if your gut feeling tells you something is amiss.”

According to Rosen, another busy period for divorce lawyers is the end of summer.

“We get very busy in August, when the summer break from school is ending,” he said.

“Some children aren’t returned from summer visits, and some parents have conflict about what school to send the children to when school resumes.”

Also, he noted that spring fever seems to hit the industry fairly hard each year.

“For some reason, we also get a fairly regular burst of new clients in April. Maybe it’s because it’s spring and a time of fresh starts... Maybe it’s because people get amorous when the warm weather returns and more adultery results in more separations. I’m not really sure what is behind the April effect.”

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