

UP AND COMING LAWYERS

LAURNA KINNEL

*Shareholder
at Fox, O'Neill and Shannon*



Kinnel balances unique case mix

Laurna Kinnel readily acknowledges that her practice at Fox, O'Neill and Shannon, entails an unusual mix of business and family-law cases.

"It is a strange hybrid," said Kinnel, who was named a shareholder last year at the Milwaukee law firm, even though she's been practicing law for less than five years. "But they fit together very well. You often have a business client who has a family-law need and then you're able to step in and help them. Knowing the background with their business is a huge plus and puts you ahead of the game."

Kinnel's meteoric rise at Fox, O'Neill and Shannon resulted in part from her efforts to expand the firm's business-law practice, said Diane Slomowitz, a shareholder at the firm.

Kinnel led various attempts at offering more services related to intellectual property. The firm now monitors and manages nearly 150 trademarks and service marks in 10 countries.

"This new practice area has increased FOS's client base, added to firm revenues and bolstered its profitability," Slomowitz said. "All of this is due to Laurna's curiosity, drive, determination and motivation."

As for working with clients on intellectual-property rights, Kinnel said that, in today's market, "branding is so important and many of our clients

have worked years on building up their name and brand, and those are intangible assets that need to be protected."

When Kinnel first joined the firm, she devoted much of her time to family law. Then a business attorney moved on and left behind a space that she eventually stepped into.

"I think it's important to be agile, and I ended up loving the corporate work," she said.

Although Kinnel is only six years out of law school, she has already taken other attorneys at Fox, O'Neill and Shannon under her wing. She also serves as secretary of the Milwaukee Young Lawyers Association.

"I've benefitted from other people lending an ear to me," she said. "It's important to have someone who is smarter and more experienced that you can talk to when you've had a particularly hard day or difficult case. I'm always willing to listen."

The ability to listen also comes in handy in her volunteer work at the House of Peace's Volunteer Legal Clinic.

"It's a great feeling to give people in need, especially if they are potentially facing a legal problem, some peace of mind by answering their questions," she said.

— MaryBeth Matzek