

Where's Campbell Law?

A street address may not be as important as it once was for lawyers on the go.

You've probably seen the question, "Where's Waldo?" There is a definite answer to this question and, after some searching most of us can point him out. Until recently, the same was true for law firms. The traditional answer to "Where is your law firm?" has been its street address. With the help of technology and flexible thinking, though, things are rapidly changing, allowing even boutique firms to re-imagine what it means to have a law firm and a law office.

Take the case of Campbell Law. In 2009, Alicia Campbell founded Campbell Law and steadily developed her consumer practice. Although her solo firm was always largely paperless, it was also relatively traditional. Alicia had an office downtown, she employed a full-time secretary and she used land lines for client calls. Things changed in 2012, when Alicia's husband, John Campbell, accepted a job as a law professor at the University of Denver and she followed him there. Faced with what Campbell Law should look like in the future, Alicia made an innovative decision. She decided to maintain her Missouri practice while expanding Campbell Law's national reach. This required re-imagining what Campbell Law did and how it did it.



Lab1500

About a year later, the result is that Campbell Law is a very different place. There are new faces, new cases, and new ways of doing business. First, Campbell Law added two attorneys: John, who can still selectively work on cases in his new role as a professor, and Erich Vieth. With them, John and Erich brought their experience and success at the Simon Law Firm where they handled class actions, appeals, and a variety of trial and appellate matters.

The lawyers of Campbell Law think of themselves as a virtual firm, but that might be overstating things. They still exist in St. Louis to the extent that they maintain a physical presence at Lab1500, a co-working space on Washington Avenue downtown. "This is a non-traditional place where we mingle with various entrepreneurs, many of them heavily into technology," Erich Vieth explains. The members of Lab1500 share an open space, including a main area that looks much like a library, as well as conference rooms and a classroom, where focus groups can be held. St. Louis is also where Erich lives and works, both for Campbell Law and as an adjunct professor at Saint Louis University School of Law.

The three attorneys of Campbell Law meet on a regular basis via Skype, in addition to using email and cell phones. Alicia Campbell, the managing partner of Campbell Law, notes, "We are in a position to run our firm with minimal support staff, because all of us are heavily invested in technology. There is great flexibility in having your office wherever you are. It allows us to evaluate and accept cases from just about anywhere around the country." This is evident in Campbell Law's case load. Campbell explains that the firm "is currently evaluating and participating in cases in Colorado, Massachusetts, Washington, Missouri, and Illinois."

How does Campbell Law make this work? By adopting innovations in technology that provide solutions for the "virtual" law firm. For example:

- CLIO provides practice management and invoicing systems for attorneys;
- Dropbox provides flexible data storage and sharing;
- Carbonite backs up cloud data according to guidelines set by the user;
- Uberconference allows for sophisticated conference calls;
- Skype provides face to face video conferencing, making meetings more personable;
- Utilization of numerous search tools and online databases allows information gathering and legal research to be almost completely paperless;
- High capacity portable scanners allow for easy and quick conversion of virtually all of Campbell Law's



Left to right – Campbell Law: John Campbell, Alicia Campbell, and Erich Vieth

documents to digital format;

- Adobe Acrobat Pro allows for paperless annotation and handling of PDFs, bates numbering, exhibit marking, redaction, extraction and consolidation of documents;
- Dual monitor setups make paperless work flow much more efficient;
- Dragon allows voice recognition in lieu of traditional dictation.
- Live receptionist services on a pay-as-you-go basis provides the needed human touch when people call.

John Campbell points out that challenging the traditional notion of what a law firm is has made Campbell Law a more interesting place, "With a light physical footprint, we are free from thinking our cases all have come from and will be filed near home. Now we pursue cases all around the country. It's an exciting way to practice law." So, while some large law firms have taken advantage of virtual offices already, technology also gives solo and small firms ways to cut costly overhead and tools to remain professional and highly effective.

Yet, the lawyers of Campbell Law emphasize that even with technology, succeeding as attorneys still comes down to maintaining good relationships with clients, opposing counsel, and referring attorneys. It still requires rolling up one's sleeves and putting in the hours. In these modern times, the trick is recognizing the ways technology can truly help do the fundamentals of lawyering better. ■