

ORLANDO BUSINESS JOURNAL

Need business litigation advice? Here's why Marc Chapman is your guy

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Marc Chapman is loyal to Dean, Mead, Egerton, Bloodworth, Capouano & Bozarth PA.

Chapman joined the firm straight out of law school 24 years ago, learning all the ins and outs of being a business litigation attorney. That paid off when the Orlando-based firm, which has 114 employees including 51 attorneys, named Chapman president through January 2016.

Here, Chapman outlines his business advice for clients and more.

Hardest business court case you've had? When there's family businesses involved, where there's family estate and several beneficiaries all fighting over money or inheritance, those are the most difficult cases because of emotion. People don't always make rational decisions and it's very difficult for them to look at things from a business standpoint.

Your most successful business case? I had a case recently that dealt with a trade secret dispute and some other issues involved where if the case wasn't able to resolve itself, my client that had a family-owned business for 35 years might have to shutdown. We had two lengthy mediations, were set for trial and a couple of weeks before trial, we were able to get a resolution, which allowed my party to keep his business. Those are the most rewarding.

How you handle losing a case? Not well. Any litigator who's been doing it for a long time will go into court where you'll think you



Dean Mead President
Marc Chapman

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have a 90 percent chance of winning and the judge makes a ruling where everyone shakes their head. I've been in court with a 10 percent chance of winning and won. You never know what's going to happen, but afterward you wonder if you could have done something else.

Any pre-court rituals? I usually go in the morning of and rewrite whatever I've done – whether I'm doing the opening or arguing the hearing, just to help me make sure I've got it.

Something lawyers do that translates into a business lesson? Be prepared and think ahead all the time. I'm a commercial litigator. I get hired usually because something's blown up – the real estate deal's gone south, somebody's not paying, somebody's not fulfilling a promise – and if you go see an attorney in advance, the odds are you can avoid having to hire me.

Do you have growth or expansion plans? We've always wanted a presence in Tallahassee, and in December we opened a lobbying group led by Pete Dunbar, who used to be a legislator and worked for the governor. We're looking at opportunities around the state.

What's an emerging legal area? Water law. What a lot of people don't realize – and it affects every person in Florida – is you have different water management districts that dictate where any city gets its water from, and that also goes for businesses and landowners. Water is becoming more scarce as Florida went from 10 million to 20 million people in the last 20-25 years. Now, Central Florida Partnership has a Central Florida Water Initiative, which helps dictate what's going to happen with water in the next 10-20 years in Central Florida.

Common client mistake? Not getting advice in advance. If you

don't do everything correctly upfront and a dispute arises, it will be 10 times costlier.

Top three do's for business clients? Have your counsel try to resolve business disputes before expensive, lengthy litigation. Hire a law firm that provides excellent legal advice, responsiveness and service. Make sure your counsel knows your business.

Top three don'ts for business clients? Don't make any significant business decisions without running your ideas by your counsel. Don't litigate if you can resolve a dispute on reasonable terms and have certainty going forward. Don't fail to tell your counsel all facts about your case or deal, even facts you don't believe are important.

What the recession taught your firm? To make decisions quickly and to do much more marketing

MARC CHAPMAN

Age: 50

Title: President, Dean, Mead, Egerton, Bloodworth, Capouano & Bozarth PA

Background: Born in Tampa and raised in Winter Haven, Chapman graduated from the University of Florida with a bachelor's in journalism and planned to go into broadcast. However, he changed his mind after a class on law for mass communications piqued his interest. He clerked with the Dean Mead law firm after he graduated in 1989 and was hired in 1990. He's been practicing law there ever since.

Type of business: Corporate law firm with five Florida locations

2013 revenue: Did not disclose