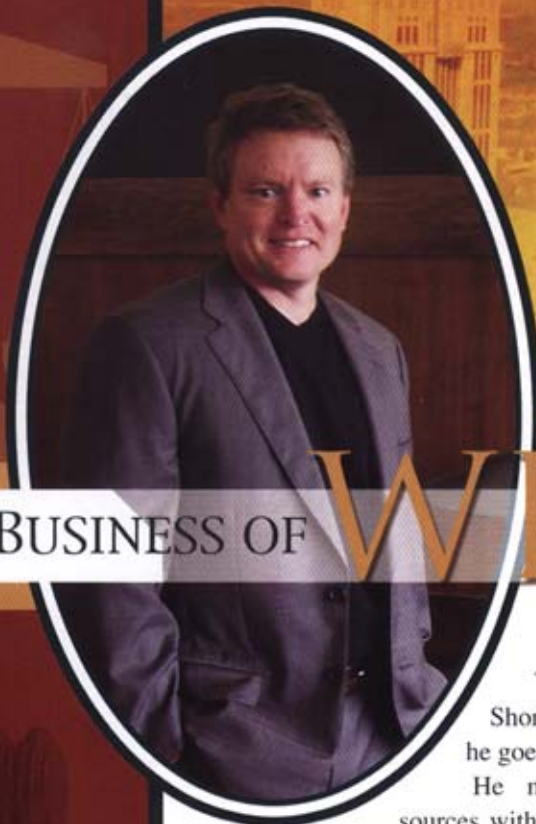


An Interview with

HOUSTON SHORT



THE BUSINESS OF

WINNING

When Houston E. Short takes on a case, he goes to war.

He marshals his resources with the sole purpose of annihilating his adversary in the courtroom or at the mediation table.

"If you really have a successful case, it will never go to trial," said Short, co-founder of Pohl & Short, a boutique law firm specializing in corporate law, commercial litigation, real estate law and personal finance.

While many clients know the basics of the legal world, some need brief tutorials to dispel preconceptions drawn from watching "The Practice" or reruns of "Perry Mason." The firm's 14 attorneys try to give those clients "a road map of what a lawsuit is," said Short. "We destroy the myth that a case will go to trial in three months."

Actually, only a small percentage of civil or criminal cases end in jury trials. The rest are resolved through mediation, arbitration, guilty pleas, or die for a lack of evidence.

Short, who earned his law degree from the University of Florida, opened the Winter Park firm in September 1993 with fellow attorney Frank L. Pohl. Within a few years, the firm received accolades and awards from the Greater Seminole Chamber of Commerce and the federal government for its innovation and vision.

Part of the success stems from the emotional as well as professional investment given each case, said Short. "We actually care about our clients and we maintain long relationships," he said. "My clients are my best friends and I carry their concerns on my sleeve."

On occasion, that passion translates into cases

where Pohl & Short becomes a white knight defending the vulnerable. In one instance the firm did free legal work for an elderly woman left destitute through the sale of her home, and in another charged a nominal fee to help a client get fair compensation on a land deal, said Short.

"We've done that on many occasions in the past and we will do that again when our hearts are so led," he said.

The opportunity to make a positive difference in someone's life is one of the attractions that drew Short to the legal profession after he graduated from Florida State University.

"Coming out I knew that I wanted to make differences, palpable differences with the people I came upon," he said. "I could never understand people who just take a job or do something that they don't care for."

He has found that the law can be a rough business where no quarter is given.

"If you don't think that, go to trial and be a nice guy and don't be prepared and see what happens," said Short, 43. "You're going to use all your assets on the battlefield of the courtroom, and the lawyer is your general."

When he is not waging legal warfare, Short enjoys spending time with his sons, Houston Jr., 12, and Noah, 6. In addition to the usual baseball, basketball and soccer games, there are afternoons at area skateboard parks where Short, wearing the appropriate pads and helmets, does his best to be the Baby Boom's answer to Tony Hawk.

He said there is a lesson in this he hopes his boys will carry with them as they move through life.

"They learn they can go out and it's okay to fail," he said. "The only failure is not to try."

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by M. Dion Thomson