

Boutique firm sticks to early roots

Pohl & Short, with 14 attorneys, calls itself 'the alternative to a large law firm.'

BY JILL KRUEGER | STAFF WRITER

ORLANDO — A dozen years ago when attorneys Frank Pohl and Houston Short broke away to start their own firm, they searched far and wide for a formula to sustain what they wanted: a boutique law practice. Pohl, in fact, traveled to New York, Chicago and Los Angeles to observe the inner workings of successful specialty firms.



Pohl



Forster

In shunning a general practice structure, the partners established in 1993 a firm, they say, rooted almost exclusively in four practice areas: real estate, business law, commercial litigation and tax and estate planning.

Today, Pohl & Short P.A. has not wavered from its focus. The firm targets small- to midsize businesses that are dealing with complex problems and want more personalized service than large law firms can offer.

"We are the alternative to a large law firm," says corporate and tax law attorney Gary A. Forster.

'Preventive law'

Though Pohl & Short started with three lawyers and a paralegal, the

firm now has 14 attorneys and a total staff of 55 people.

Pohl & Short P.A.

Year founded: 1993

Name partners: Frank Pohl, Houston Short

Attorneys: 14

Total staff: 55

Practice areas: Real estate, business law, commercial litigation and tax and estate planning

Web site: www.pohlshort.com



Pohl gives several reasons for the firm's longevity.

Among them is the fact that the firm practices "preventive law." Pohl refers to the firm's attorneys as

'Our goal is no more than 15 or 16 lawyers. We don't want to add clients just to add clients, but to add quality clients.'

Frank Pohl

Partner in Pohl & Short P.A.

"counselors at law" who build relationships with their clients and help them solve problems before they develop into big issues.

Take, for example, Dr. Alan M. Cohen, chief executive officer and medical director of the National Deaf Academy LLC.

"I have not had a single contact with a secretary or a paralegal," he

says. "I have direct access to three senior attorneys whenever I need it."

Cohen says he'll continue doing business with Pohl & Short, because "it is a small commercial firm that offers sophisticated legal services."

Limiting firm's size

Pohl & Short recently added a new partner and a litigator. But unlike many other small law firms, Pohl says he's limiting the firm's size.

"Our goal is no more than 15 or 16 lawyers," he says. "We don't want to add clients just to add clients, but to add quality clients."

Rich Heinle, a corporate business law veteran previously with Foley & Lardner, was recently elected as a partner. Pohl also brought aboard Orlando litigator Steve McDonald, who has more than 20 years of experience.



Heinle



McDonald

Their backgrounds are typical of the firm's attorneys, who have an average of 10-plus years of experience.

Beyond the two recent additions, Pohl says he plans to add two more attorneys at the most.

When you go beyond 15 or 16 attorneys, "it is hard to maintain the quality of what goes out the door," he says.