

LIFE SPANS

THE BRIDGE DIVORCE STRATEGIES NEWSLETTER

INTERESTING INFO YOU CAN READ OVER A SINGLE CUP OF COFFEE!

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JANE DOE STORY OF THE MONTH

I'm a numbers person. As an attorney, I'll guess that you're not. (One of my attorney clients told me, in a moment of candor, "When I went to law school, they promised me there wouldn't be any math!")

Most of the public, including your clientele, overlook what you already know: Judges are attorneys, too.

In other words, they hate dealing with numbers just as much as you do.

Which segues nicely to our latest Jane Doe story.

At the time of her split, after a two-decades-long marriage, Jane was ill-prepared to face the world, financially. She'd been a stay-at-home mom, while her husband had enjoyed a tremendously lucrative career. Jane wanted to become a teacher; for this, she'd have to go back to school. And this is while she'd be shouldering the burden of raising all four kids, including one with special needs.

Jane's husband wasn't exactly generous. He offered a mere pittance when it came to child support and alimony, especially given the vast difference in his earning power. His demands were so outrageous, that mediation went out the window, and the case went straight to court.

Which brings us back to judges.

Arizona, as you know, is not an alimony-friendly state. Judges earn about \$100k a year, and they often have little sympathy for anyone who makes more than them. So how do you argue for Jane's case here? How do you get her the rehabilitative alimony she needs to support her education and get back into the workforce?

Even bigger: How do you show a numbers-hating judge just how much Jane would suffer if she accepted her husband's offer?

Jane's attorney called me. I'll spare you all the details of the property tracing and forensic financial analysis, but I was able to create a very simple graph to show the judge. Over a 30-year span, it mapped out a reasonable projection of Jane's financial position, and her husband's, based on his offer.

Picture a horizontal "V." With the apex at the left, and the husband's net worth going up over time... and Jane's going down. One look at that is compelling to a judge. We did a lot on that case—not just the graph—but boy did Jane's attorney look like a hero.

FINANCIAL TIP OF THE MONTH

As you know, spousal maintenance in Arizona is based on the husband's ability to pay, and the wife's reasonable need. There are also the time guidelines, based on the length of the marriage. And as I mentioned above, you really need to make a strong case for rehabilitative maintenance.

In the story above, the husband had been earning about \$50k a month. That's a lot more than the judge makes. But between Jane's need to get an education, and arguing for a deviation from standard child-support guidelines in order to spare her kids from a sudden lifestyle reduction, we really needed to craft our case carefully. You need to make the same kinds of considerations; don't take them lightly. Besides, anything you offer your clients that can be construed as "financial"—or especially "tax"—advice puts you on the hook, liability-wise. Offload that risk to a pro like me.

THERE REALLY IS A FREE LUNCH

Given today's COVID-19 environment, we are now offering online CLE, and will order lunch for the attorneys in your office who would like to participate from their remote locations. What a tasty way to learn things about the financial side of divorce that fly under your radar—and help you earn from one to three hours of CLE credit in the process!

Simply give us a call at (480) 378-2383 (or send an email to carma.hall@bridgedivorcestrategies.com) and say, "Hey! We'd love to take you up on that ingenious remote lunch-and-learn opportunity!" There's no obligation. Call us today!

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