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Life's lessons and experiences have a way of shaping who we are

Hi, it's me. Yes, I am back. It has been a while. I hope that 2016 ended up being a great year for you and that 2017 is off to a good start.

Paradigm Shift has been on hiatus for six months, and it is now time to get back into the swing of things. Thanks to those of you who contacted me over the past few months to check in and to share your feedback with me about what this column has meant to you — your warm wishes are truly appreciated.

Since 2012, we have explored together the different facets of the practice of law which have been impacted by the seismic changes our profession has experienced since the recession, as well as the business context which drives the legal profession, and professional services organizations in general.

The name of this column — Paradigm Shift — is reflective of how our perspectives have forever changed due to the profound global changes that have occurred around us and what we can and should do as a profession and as individuals to not only survive but thrive in the not-so-new normal.

Sometimes, our frames of reference can significantly shift due to events that occur in our personal lives. This confluence of experiences known as life can often feel like a strange and rather lonely set of circumstances. And it can take time — days, weeks, months, maybe even years — to fully understand and process what has happened, to assess next steps and to determine the short- and long-term impact of these events.

Last year was a year filled with change for me — big, small,

good, bad, happy and sad. Through it all, there has been opportunity for growth, for changing course and direction and for developing a new, fresh outlook on things. As I reflect on the past year, the phrase “Time Passages” repeatedly comes to mind.

Some of you will recognize this as the name of a song from the late '70s by Al Stewart. There are a number of takeaways from the lyrics — the importance of focusing on what really matters, enjoying life's journey and not just focusing on the destination and truly treasuring those people and experiences that have shaped and meant the most to us and not letting them get lost or forgotten along the way.

Professionally, the past year plus has been a time of many new experiences. I have kept very busy with my practice and in various firm leadership roles, including with my practice group and in national hiring. Each of these roles has given me the opportunity to help my firm reshape and redefine how we do business, including in our relationships with clients and in spotting and developing the next generation of talent.

It is against this backdrop that much of my work life over the past year has been spent assisting several colleagues in transitioning their practices, as they make decisions to begin the next chapter of their lives pursuing personal and family interests in lieu of practicing law.

These experiences have given me the chance to meet and work with new clients, which has been rewarding. Yet underlying these opportunities is a tinge of melancholy as I recognize that somewhere along the way the student has become the teacher and the child has become the adult.

PARADIGM SHIFT



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Where did all of those years go?

Just as a number of my partners transitioned to a new life chapter in 2016, our office was getting ready to transition to life in a new building. Let's just say it sounds a lot easier than it is. After a 30-year tenure at 203 N. LaSalle St., we were all tasked with packing up our professional lives into a few cardboard boxes and heading west to 444 W. Lake St.

There were a lot of memories in those halls at 203 — for me it was 23 years and literally half my life working in the same building every day. It was an amazing ride — so many people I have known grew up there right alongside me.

And while we all know it is the people and not the place that really matters, I nevertheless could not help but feel that a little part of me got left behind when we

left 203, much like when I traded in my first car or moved out of my dad's house to make my way in the world.

While each of these experiences has been poignant and memorable, none of them compare to the shock and sadness of the untimely passing of family members, friends and colleagues over the past 15 months. The passing of my beloved aunt, who lived a wonderfully long life filled with joy, laughter and love in particular profoundly affected me.

She was the last member of an incredible generation in my family and the last truly maternal influence in my life since my mother's passing nearly 30 years ago. She will be missed.

As lawyers and individuals, we are all a product of our experiences — they determine who we are, how we see the world and how we react to what is going on around us. What may seem to be a purely professional experience undoubtedly has ripple effects in our personal lives and what may seem like a purely personal event likewise impacts us as professionals.

The two are inextricably intertwined, shaping who we are and who we become. This past year has had a profound impact on who I am now and who I will be going forward in the years to come.

As we move forward, we must always remember the people, events and experiences that have shaped us and created the foundation for who we are. We must remember to bring them along with us and never leave them behind. By doing so, we become the best that we can be to our clients, colleagues, friends and family.

I look forward to seeing more of you in 2017.