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## Nimble practitioners build strong businesses and serve clients well

The new year is well underway, and we all remain hopeful that this will be a significantly better year on many fronts.

As we balance our new year's goals with our long-standing work and family routines, we should be mindful that change remains the constant undercurrent in our lives.

Nothing is static and we are constantly on the move, which presents myriad opportunities and challenges.

While all of this uncertainty can make us uncomfortable and apprehensive, it is in our best interest to both adapt and leverage this dynamic reality to our advantage.

Being nimble is a critical part of this equation.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "nimble" as "quick and light in motion" and "marked by quick, alert, clever conception, comprehension or resourcefulness."

While these two concepts are interrelated, they are actually quite different and call upon distinct skill sets.

One relates to action and movement and feels reactive, while the other describes one's thought process, is strategic and seems more proactive.

Both concepts provide us with useful guidance for navigating the ups and downs of today's business environment and help ensure that we are responding appropriately.

Being nimble enables us to adapt and react to the rapidly changing circumstances which impact our clients' businesses on a daily basis.

We are able to see how their needs may be evolving in response to events in their environment and how we may need to quickly alter our tack in order to effectively address the circumstances

they are currently facing.

As nimble practitioners, we are not discouraged by the possibility that our past recipes for success no longer work and that we may need to self-correct. Instead, we are flexible, resilient and able to respond quickly to the current reality.

We seek to understand the genesis of change and where it is likely to lead in an effort to enhance predictability and so that we can better position our clients and ourselves for what's next.

There are many ways in which our practices can benefit when we are nimble.

We are better able to create business opportunities in the face of uncertainty. We can quickly and accurately predict changes that may be afoot which are likely to impact our clients' organizations, and we are able to adjust our approach accordingly.

Sometimes these changes are swift and can range anywhere from significant events in the life cycle of their businesses such as acquisitions, divestitures or compliance issues to a forced change of counsel due to an unexpected conflict.

Whatever the situation, being nimble enables us to be there for our clients in their hour of need in a more meaningful way and to continuously demonstrate our value as their trusted adviser.

We are not intimidated by the prospect of expanding our existing client relationships beyond just our area of expertise. Rather, we embrace the opportunity to learn more about all of their legal and business needs and to take a more holistic approach in our work with them.

These types of efforts are both welcomed by clients and can pay great dividends in the long run.

Being nimble also enables us to be more strategic in the ways in which we develop relationships

### PARADIGM SHIFT



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with prospective clients.

This is particularly true during challenging times such as a recession, when there is often significant disruption in the market and when the old rules no longer apply.

At such times, it often becomes more difficult to find ways to differentiate ourselves.

We must all demonstrate both sophisticated substantive talents and equally important soft skills, which are often tied to high performance in critical areas such as client service and relationship management.

Being nimble is another arrow

“There are many ways in which our practices can benefit when we are nimble.”

in our emotional intelligence quiver and enables us to effectively strike this delicate balance from one potential client to the next.

No two businesses have the same legal needs and by being nimble, we are able to quickly discern how best to present our capabilities in a way that resonates with our audience and to adapt to swiftly changing circumstances during our initial meetings and communications.

We are able to think outside the box, spot issues and provide logic and insight as to how best to address them. Being thoughtfully and strategically quick on our feet provides yet another way we can meaningfully stand apart from our competition.

Just as our clients are barraged with new opportunities and challenges on a daily basis, so are we. It is very important for us to nimble position our organizations and ourselves with the same amount of savvy and foresight as we bring to our clients.

This means that we must be vigilant about the business of our business and must never lose sight of those qualities which will ensure our short and long-term success.

We need to regularly evaluate what effectively distinguishes us in a particular geographic market, within certain practice areas and in a given business sector.

We should be continuously aware of who our competition currently is and who it is likely to be tomorrow as well as those characteristics which successfully differentiate us all from one another.

By doing so, we can more accurately predict how certain issues are likely to evolve over time and more effectively leverage these changes into opportunities for our organizations and ourselves.