

How to Choose a *Spouse* Divorce Attorney?

By Paul Nelson, Esq.

Here's irony for you: To escape one's relationship—your marriage—you must create another relationship—with your divorce attorney.

And just like a marriage, your attorney-client relationship will require commitment, demand honesty, and often hinge on compromise. The difference? Unlike a marriage, your relationship with a divorce attorney is designed to be short-lived.

Even so, you should look for a lawyer much like you would a spouse. Accordingly, here are some tips when divorce attorney seeking:

1. Ask for References

Matchmakers have been around for centuries. Many cultures still use them to pair compatible mates from the pool of local singles. Even in our more "liberal Western culture, it's still common for friends to set each other up with dates, and for people to seek the approval of family and loved ones before getting "serious" with a potential husband or wife.

Likewise, when looking for an attorney, it makes sense to ask the advice and seek references from others in your professional circle, such as your CPA/financial advisor, business lawyer, or business coach.

2. Locate a State Bar-Certified Specialist in Family Law

One of the best sources to find an

attorney is the State Bar website. The State Bar of California maintains a list of members who are Certified Specialists in their area of law. Each attorney has met substantial law practice and educational requirements in addition to receiving favorable evaluations by other attorneys and judges familiar with their work in a particular legal specialty.

3. Assess Chemistry

Relationships that work on paper don't always do so in real life. That's why, no matter how well a divorce attorney may be rated, you need a sit-down to see if you "click." As with a personal relationship, make sure your values and expectations are in sync. If not, you may be dealing with a professional divorce—along with your marital one.

4. Discuss Money

Before committing to marriage, it's common for couples to talk about how they will handle finances. This can be uncomfortable, but it's an issue that must be faced head-

on to avoid long-term problems. Likewise, when talking with an attorney, fees and expenses must be addressed up front. Also, don't be fooled by what appears to be a low hourly rate. An inexperienced attorney may charge less by the hour but require more time to accomplish what a more skilled and expensive lawyer could do in far less time.

5. Exchange Vows

Once you and your selected attorney are ready to commit, it's time to exchange vows. Although these don't yet have the traditional caché of "to love, honor and cherish," they nonetheless express the ideal behaviors to which both parties should aspire:

• Lawyer's Vows:

- ✓ I vow to advocate for your position zealously and effectively.
- ✓ I vow to maintain confidentiality 'til death do us part.
- ✓ I vow to interact with

opposing counsel in a dignified, yet assertive manner.

✓ I vow to provide direct and unambiguous advice.

✓ I vow to take reasonable legal positions based on the law as it is or should be.

• Client Vows:

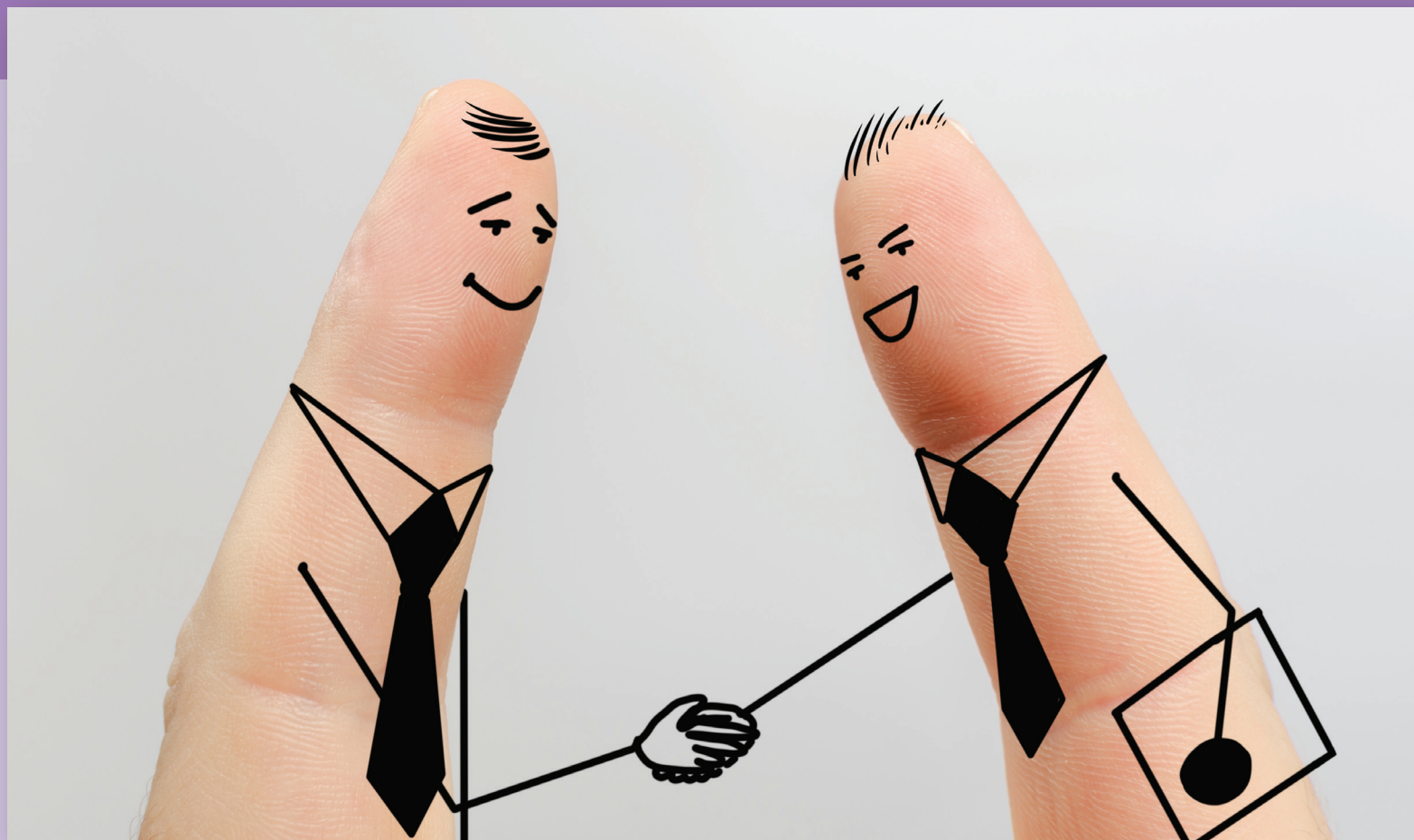
✓ I vow to be honest with my attorney.

✓ I vow to collect and share information with my attorney.

✓ I vow to adhere to instructions on behavior in and out of court.

✓ I vow to be responsive to my attorney's requests.

A divorce is a painful and demanding process that can trigger extreme emotions. Yet if you have an attorney whom you trust, you can minimize the discomfort and emerge in a better position to start the next phase of your life.



PAUL NELSON

NELSON  KIRKMAN

FAMILY LAW ATTORNEYS  ADVISORS

4100 Newport Place Drive, Suite 250,
Newport Beach, California 92660

949-760-8888 ■ nelsonkirkman.com

High Stakes Divorce Lawyers