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Aimée Israel

Named by *Profit Magazine* as one of Canada’s Top 100 Women Entrepreneurs in 2009, Israel believes practising law exposed her to the benefits of maintaining a high standard of professionalism.

“Law reinforced the importance of being responsive, knowing the etiquette and having a real attention to detail. That environment also helped me to develop a strong work ethic.

“Certain aspects of practising law such as writing, negotiating and dealing with contracts are skills I still draw on in running my own business. My legal career also reinforced the value of relationship building and networking. I appreciated the collegiality within my law practice and that has served me well in my business.”

The new vanguard

Women are leaving private practice for a range of reasons that include – but are not limited to – childcare responsibilities. While the decision to have children informed the timing of career changes Israel aimed to make, the desire for a family was not an exclusive motivation for the transition.

“I believe there’s a bit of a misperception when people see my online biography, or see me as a woman leaving law – that they think it was for the flexibility,” Israel says.

“That was certainly a consideration, but I think more the driving factors were the viable idea and the desire to cross over from law to business.”

Sharon Davis, President of the Women’s Law Association of Ontario, is familiar with the oft-recited narrative suggesting that success in the legal profession can be at odds with parenting.

Davis acknowledges that lawyers leaving practice or considering a change can benefit from knowledge about the experiences of others. She was gratified that at the Annual Alternative Careers for Women in Law Program, a panel of influential female lawyers could lend insight and wisdom to participants. Davis believes that education around alternative career strategies offers an advantage to lawyers at firms and across every industry.



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“In the general population, people change jobs five times in a career and so why shouldn’t or couldn’t we do that within the practice of law itself?” Davis asks.

After more than 15 years as a lawyer on the senior management team at a publishing company, Davis is, for the first time in her career, practising at a law firm.

“Just because you’re not in private practice does not mean you’re not a lawyer. I think that is the notion with which a lot of us are preoccupied. I think that thinking needs to change and people need to understand they do have alternatives.”

Any trepidation Davis had about her transition from an in-house role to private practice has been replaced with confidence about the range of engaging opportunities that exist for Ontario lawyers.

“The most interesting people I meet generally have had varying careers over time – people who have done a wide variety of things – whether it is as in-house counsel, litigation or working for non-profit organizations and government,” Davis says.

“Or, they go all over the place, or they change an area of law – or they do something completely different. The profession of law offers an awful lot of choice. There are a lot of things you can do with a law degree and with a membership in the Law Society. I think what we need to do as a profession is take away the stigma and value the many wonderful opportunities we have as lawyers both within and outside the traditional practice of law.” 