

Blog

Interview | Anne-Marie Cade (Divorce Right)

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Anne-Marie Cade (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/anne-marie-cade-5679902/>) launched Divorce Right (<https://www.divorceright.com.au/>) with the aim of making the divorce process smoother, kinder and less painful and keeping families out of court. She works with couples to empower them to reach a peaceful, amicable separation and stay out of the family court as she believes this approach will ensure a positive outcome for the family.

She won the Thought Leader of the Year award at the 2017 Women in Law Awards and was a finalist in the Sole Practitioner category and was also shortlisted for the Women in Law Excellence Award. In 2016 she won in the individual category at the Lexis Nexis & Janders Dean Legal Innovation Awards and was a finalist in 2015.

Sophie Tversky (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/sophie-tversky1/>) (TLF) recently asked Anne-Marie some questions below!



(<http://thelegalforecast.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/michael-insta.jpg>)

We've read that you studied in Colombo, what cultural differences underpin market changes? What differences have you noticed in innovation in Colombo and Australia?

The legal profession in Sri Lanka is steeped in tradition and this is partly because of the very conservative nature of the profession. The younger lawyers in Sri Lanka are accepting of innovation and the changes that come with it but it will be a very slow and gradual process before it changes the practice of the law in Sri Lanka.

What does legal innovation in the family law sector mean to you and how did you know Divorce Right filled a gap in the industry?

In the course of my practice I noticed the dissatisfaction among clients particularly in regards to the approach to family law. It is almost from a sense of fear that they would make that call to a family lawyer if they were considering divorce as they feared that it would cost them a lot of money that they would be billed for every call they made and every question they asked and furthermore they were dissatisfied with the adversarial approach to resolving family law disputes.

I am dedicated to changing the perception of how people divorce as a community and as a country and I encourage couples to work together with a mediator to resolve their disputes.

So it's all about the approach I adopt when dealing with my clients and expressing empathy, compassion and seeing the problem thorough my client's eyes. This is an under cultivated ability for lawyers. To really take the time to listen to the clients and understand the emotional under belly of what they are saying.

I have a vision and purpose to help people move on so when I work with a client I encourage them to look at the bigger picture, their goals and needs going forward and make decisions that will work for the family moving forward. I see divorce not just as a legal problem but an issue that has legal, emotional and financial implications. I adopt a holistic approach to the way I approach my client's problem.

How is technology facilitating greater understanding/empathy with clients?

When people, particularly millennial clients, need to see a lawyer and even if they receive a referral from a friend for a lawyer, they will "google" the lawyer first before calling them. They will check out the website, the social media profile and make a decision as to whether they want to hire that lawyer or not. Lawyers can use technology/ social media to interact with their clients, to humanise the law and build trust so that clients will engage them when they do need a lawyer. Lawyers can also do this by blogging and providing people with good content, legal information freely. This is another way of building trust with members of their community.

Clients are now more empowered and want to be always kept informed about where their matter is at. Client portals are very useful as all information regarding a client's matter can be stored on the portal and will be easily accessible to the client 24/7.

DivorceRight provides spouses with a 'support team' including: lawyers, financial advisors, mediators and counsellors, but the process is primarily driven by the spouses. In what way do you think 'party led' processes will inform other practice areas of law?

Lawyers may not always have all the answers to their client's problems. They can come together with other professionals to work collaboratively. When this approach is taken higher order and complex problems can be

solved by getting the insight needed from other professionals and disciplines other than pure law. This approach can be helpful in other areas of the law as well not just family law.

As accessibility is a key part of your platform, how do you ensure that you achieve a work/life balance particularly given the growing expectation of people to obtain information instantaneously?

I don't believe in a work/ life balance as such. I believe in work life integration. Work/life balance creates almost a sense of competition between the two elements. Whereas when you integrate your work life with your home life, this approach creates more synergies between all areas of your life such as work, home/family, community, personal well-being, and health. I think this a far healthier approach to adopt.

However success will be about seamlessly integrating your work life with your personal life rather than keeping work and self/family at bay (balance).

Do you think innovation will change adversarialism?

I think what is really disruptive is changing HOW we practice as lawyers. We need to be more client focused and see problems from our client's perspective. It also means adopting a more collaborative approach and seeking alternative means of dispute resolution. We need to create the perception that lawyer culture is changing. And when people notice that lawyers are behaving differently and practicing differently it will change the narrative of what it means to be a lawyer.

It's important that in order to practice in this way it's not enough for lawyers to merely subscribe to this vision but rather to act consistently with it.

What is your greatest learning in your legal career thus far?

Personalize the experience for your clients and they will love you for it.

What is your creative outlet/de-stresser?

Spending time with family, listening to music, going to the movies.

What is your legal forecast for dispute resolution?

Alternative means of dispute resolution and collaboration

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