

Ortiz & Schick

Big firm expertise without the big firm

Partners Michael Ortiz and John-Paul Schick founded Ortiz & Schick in 2006 after working for large firms and arriving at the conclusion that, while clients might want big firm expertise, they don't want the bureaucracy, higher fees, and impersonal service that often comes as part of the package. Ortiz envisioned a smaller firm through which the two could create a positive and highly personal atmosphere for both clients and employees, an atmosphere that Schick says isn't possible in a larger firm: "One day while working for a large firm in Cleveland, Ohio, I was in the elevator with one of the senior partners whose case I was working on. When I spoke to him, I could tell he had no idea who I was. That's when I realized, while big firm culture is fine for some, it isn't for me."

The result of their venture is a small firm able to handle large firm work faster, more efficiently, and with results that rival or surpass that of larger firms – but at a lower price. All of this is paired with exceptional personal attention and responsiveness, as well as a flat organizational structure that ensures direct contact with the lawyers. "Our clients work directly with the one or two lawyers working on their case," says Schick, "as opposed to having a senior partner, a junior partner and several associates and paralegals working on the matter." They are set up so clients can access them directly – through direct phone and fax numbers (in addition to email). "We pride ourselves in turning work around in 24 to 48 hours," says Schick, "whereas with large firms, often it takes that long for a partner to delegate the task to an associate, who then takes several days to do the work, and then it sits on the partner's desk to be reviewed before going out."

After working together since 1998, starting their own firm has also given Ortiz and Schick the freedom to focus on what they do best – handle transactions and disputes (including litigation) for developers, commercial landlords and tenants, general contractors, engineering firms and architects, and general matters involving business law, bonding and surety law, commercial real estate law, and construction law. More than two years after starting the firm,



Michael Ortiz and John-Paul Schick

and attitude to contribute to their carefully crafted firm culture. "The mix of people we have at Ortiz & Schick is very, very important to us," says Schick. "We foster a work environment with little or no hierarchy – although Michael and I have our names on the company, we are not above learning from other lawyers and our staff – and we tell them this. Open communication – and lots of it – is very important to us. We focus on doing things that work, not on doing things a certain way because they've always been done that way. We are open to changes that work, that help us better serve our clients, and that foster a more enjoyable work place." ■

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– Robbie McConnell of the Raleigh firm McConnell Construction

they are still providing services to a majority of their former large-firm clients. For example, Dave Hausfeld, Raleigh Division President for Drees Homes says, "We have been working with Michael and John-Paul for several years and have been extremely impressed with their knowledge, creativity, and determination. Their 'can do' attitude is incredible." According to Tony Montecalvo of The Main Street America Group, "I have been involved in surety claims for the past 23 years, and I recognize and appreciate the experience and professionalism that Michael and the firm bring to the table. They provide swift, efficient, and economical advice for resolving claims and disputes with various public and private owners in contract surety cases. I value their common-sense approach to handling such complex construction and surety issues." Robbie McConnell of the Raleigh firm McConnell Construction notes, "Their personal attention and dedication to obtaining final results is what makes these guys stand above the rest. As a contractor results are an absolute must."

Ortiz and Schick have hired professionals with the appropriate experience, work ethic,



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