

SOMERSET COUNTY LAW FIRMS MERGE

Once courtroom enemies, law firms' lawyers unite

By KARA L. RICHARDSON
Staff Writer

BRIDGEWATER — A marriage of two major Somerset County general practice law firms with high-profile corporate clients now includes a couple of divorce attorneys.

Norris McLaughlin & Marcus announced Tuesday that five members of the Somerville law firm Schachter, Trombadore, Offen & Stanton have joined their firm. The firm's name of Norris McLaughlin & Marcus will remain as is.

There was talk of merging 30 years ago, said Richard Norris of Norris McLaughlin & Marcus. Back then, his firm had about eight attorneys and Schachter, Trombadore, Offen & Stanton's firm had about five lawyers.

"It was a long engagement," said Norris, who had 85 attorneys in his firm before the merger, effective last Saturday.

The merger made sense now, said Stephen Offen, a former Schachter, Trombadore, Offen & Stanton partner. His firm was looking to update its infrastructure. Now, as a part of Norris McLaughlin & Marcus, the members of the former firm are able to expand services for clients such as Verizon Wireless and Andersen Windows and Doors.

For example, Offen specializes in business law. In a smaller firm, attorneys would have to do a lot more legwork to answer clients' questions about intellectual property or environment law. Norris McLaughlin & Marcus has more than a dozen attorneys who specialize in those areas.

Norris McLaughlin & Marcus, now more than 50 years old, has handled a long list of high-profile clients. Some of those clients include Pfizer, Aventis Pharmaceuticals, Bayer, CITGO Petroleum, Deloitte & Touche, Home Depot USA, Johnson & Johnson, Rutgers, Stop & Shop Supermarket, Toyota, Unilever, National Starch & Chemical Company, Paine Webber, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, JPMorgan Chase, Wachovia, Washington



STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY JOHNSON
Richard Norris of the law firm Norris McLaughlin & Marcus, left, discusses the recent merger with the firm Schachter, Trombadore, Offen & Stanton with lawyers Stephen Offen, Richard Schachter and Michael Stanton, right.

After talks of merging decades ago, merger now made sense to senior partners.

Mutual Bank and Somerset Valley Bank. The firm has represented competitive telecommunica-

tions carriers before the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities since 1983. They helped MCI become the first interexchange carrier authorized to provide competitive long distance service in New Jersey. Norris McLaughlin & Marcus attorneys have participated in every major BPU telecommunications proceedings in the past 22 years.

While members of the two firms have been courtroom adversaries — especially in matrimonial cases — several times, all cases in which both firms were on opposing sides were resolved before the merger, the attorneys said.

The new attorneys with Norris McLaughlin & Marcus are:

- Richard Schachter of Branchburg, with an expertise in civil and commercial litigation.

- Offen, of Hillsborough, concentrates his practice in business litigation, corporate law and real estate, in addition to business law.

- Michael Stanton of Montgomery is focused on matrimonial law.

- Timothy McKeown of Hillsborough concentrates on civil and commercial litigation, real estate and bankruptcy matters.

- Jerry D'Aniello has an expertise in matrimonial law.

The Schachter firm's partner John Trombadore will not join the larger practice. Instead, he will open his own practice, next to the building where his brother, the late Raymond Trombadore Sr. practiced law, on High Street in Somerville, Offen said. John Trombadore could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

The former Schachter, Trombadore, Offen & Stanton attorneys will stay in their current office at 45 E. High St. in Somerville with the same phone number, (908) 722-5700, until further notice.

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STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY JOHNSON
Attorneys involved in the law firms' merger include, from left, Bill Dreier, Stephen Offen, John Eagan, Richard Schachter, Richard Norris, Karen Thompson, Joel Jacobson and Michael Stanton.