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Pitfalls to Avoid When Selling a Practice

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# A Healthy Practice

*The Health Law Partners is an expanding healthcare law practice in a rapidly growing industry.*

**F**or the five founding partners of The Health Law Partners (HLP)— Adrienne Dresevic, Jessica Gustafson, Robert Iwrey, Carey Kalmowitz and Abby Pendleton—it is a dichotomy that has defined the arc of their professional journey: specialized service within one very specific area of the law.

The Southfield, Mich.-based firm touts its ability to present a diverse range of experts focusing on a host of legal specialties within the broader healthcare segment as one of its biggest assets. “But at the same time,” says Dresevic, “we have built our reputation on the fact that we can say what very few other law firms can: everyone here focuses exclusively on healthcare law.”

Each of the five founding partners maintains a specialized service niche within the broader field of healthcare law—a pattern of diversification and specialization that extends throughout the firm. HLP practice groups cover Stark and Anti-Kickback law compliance, healthcare billing and reimbursement issues, and Medicare and Medicaid appeals—as well as licensing issues, physician and staff privileging and participation with third-party payers. HLP attorneys also provide post-audit defense and appeals, a specialty that provides them with valuable insight and experience into the compliance side of the legal



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equation—identifying and addressing avoidable vulnerabilities and exposures. The result is a complementary and seemingly comprehensive assemblage of expertise that spans the entire health law spectrum.

It is this combination of professional focus with a rare breadth of legal and medical expertise that has helped HLP carve out a distinctive niche in the marketplace; a successful foothold that has fueled subsequent expansion into both New York and Georgia. The founding partners make it clear that their goal all along has been to not just start a healthcare law practice, but to do so in a way that met their own high

standards for service, responsiveness and experienced legal counsel for a wide range of healthcare clients.

Perhaps not surprisingly, HLP’s client roster mirrors the variation found in its practice groups. The firm works with everyone from solo practitioners to group practices, hospitals to hospice organizations, and pharmacies to physicians. Says Kalmowitz, “We have represented essentially every variety of stakeholders, from larger health systems, to individual physicians and specialists.”

According to Dresevic, the speed with which the healthcare industry itself has evolved has had a foundational and lasting impact on the firm’s growth over the last five years. “Healthcare is one of the fastest developing areas of the law, simply because the industry is so dynamic, and because it brings together so many disparate elements—technology, finance and medicine—that all continue to have a huge impact on the industry and on our practice.”

“Every single one of us has been there and watched the changing trends over the years,” adds Kalmowitz, “not just watching, but participating in some of the most important and influential developments of an evolving industry.”

*“Healthcare law is fundamentally a national issue”*

“We haven’t just worked in the industry, we’ve lived it.”

Accelerating industry growth has also been a big factor in the firm’s recent decisions to expand into New York and Georgia, market-driven strategic choices that were motivated by less by the desire for growth than by the practical demands of servicing an expanding client roster.

“Healthcare law is fundamentally a national issue,” says Dresevic. “And with so many emerging legal issues on the federal level, we have always had clients from all over the country.”

She goes on to explain that strong client and professional relationships on the ground in New York made it a natural fit for HLP to get licensed in the state and establish a full-time practice. HLP says that, while its client roster may be geographically diverse, the firm’s high client retention rate and long list of satisfied clients stems from an organizational approach that applies sometimes complex legal principles toward a very specific goal: delivering what clients need, whenever and wherever they need it.

“It boils down to solving problems,” says Pendleton.

This constructive, practical and solution-oriented approach demands not just an established level of industry familiarity and legal expertise, but a corresponding ability to be flexible—and even creative—when necessary. The firm prides itself on making deals happen, an ability that demands both sophistication and innovation. As Pendleton puts it, “In an industry that can be a little bit ‘paint-by-numbers’ at times, a little bit of artistry and nuance goes a long way.”

HLP says that the firm’s established relationships with decision-makers is also a big plus, particularly when navigating through the always-changing features of a complex regulatory landscape. And, in an industry where time can literally be money, HLP’s speed to deliver is a point of pride with the firm’s attorneys.

“We have consistently demonstrated to our clients that we have the ability to provide great results quickly, efficiently and affordably: on-time and under deadline,” says Dresevic.

But while the firm remains committed to a practical and proactive approach that delivers workable solutions for its clients, in the end, it all goes back to the diversity of the HLP professional toolkit. “We are all healthcare attorneys, but also all have sub-specialties,” explains Kalmowitz. He adds that this facilitates a business model that provides more professional resources and capacity than a boutique firm, but with a level of specialized experience and expertise that few—if any—big national names can match.

That seems like a good place for HLP to be in going forward.

Because it is not just the industry itself that is changing. Healthcare organizations of all sizes are consolidating their services, integrating new lines of service into existing practices and restructuring in the face of stricter and more complex healthcare regulations. HLP is banking on the fact that clients, when confronted with the realities of operating in an environment where new legal and logistical obstacles are practically a way of life, will require the experienced counsel of a trusted healthcare attorney to operate successfully.

“We believe that in this brave new world of healthcare law, our proven ability to help organizations integrate financially and operationally without violating healthcare regulations will continue to be extraordinarily valuable,” says Dresevic. “If we can continue to help our clients navigate treacherous regulatory waters and identify innovative and effective new ways to structure partnerships and professional relationships that satisfies both their operational priorities and their legal responsibilities, we anticipate continued success.”



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