

Triangle Law Group

Making the Practice of Law an Art

By Bob Friedman



When Laurie Gengo and her husband Bob – a general contractor – designed, built and decorated the new offices for Raleigh's Triangle Law Group, they did it with Laurie's clients in mind. "We wanted to have an artsy feel, an open and relaxed feel because when people come here they're usually not in a good mood," says founder Gengo. "We want our clients to be as calm and stress-free as possible." The office is decorated in warm colors with paintings of landscapes, unique art work, comfortable furniture and soft lighting. Gengo encourages the attorneys at the firm to have a similar relaxed demeanor when meeting with clients. "We want to make our clients feel like we care, regardless of the size of the case," she says. "When clients are at ease," Gengo explains, "they can more freely communicate about their case which in turn, empowers us to serve them more effectively."

Gengo brought an artist's vision to the office build-out because away from the office, she paints in oils, acrylics, pastels, does glass mosaics and even sells metal embossed electrical switch plates online. She describes her painting as impressionistic in the styles of Renoir, Tarky and Degas. A number of years ago, her painting caught the eye of A.P. Carlton, the then-managing partner at The Sanford Holshouser Law Firm. Their joint love of art led to Gengo joining the firm.

Gengo works on her art late at night. "When I work on my art, I'm not thinking on a conscious level about anything I'm doing here at the office. However, I believe I'm thinking about it on an unconscious level because, the next day, even though I've gone to sleep late, I feel really, really relaxed and I'm more productive for the firm's clients," says Gengo.

A native of Jamestown in western New York, Gengo is a graduate of the State University of New York at Buffalo law school. She worked at Poyner Spruill and The Sanford Holshouser Law Firm before starting Triangle Law Group. Gengo wanted to create a low-key, relaxed firm that had a culture different from the large, buttoned up firms where she worked. "Nobody teaches you about client relations in law school, but it's equally important as book knowledge," says Gengo.

The four-attorney, all-woman law firm is heavily focused on real estate issues and litigation. Gengo is a licensed real estate broker and a real estate investor. One of Gengo's practice areas is representing fellow real estate brokers before the North Carolina Real Estate Commission. The firm also represents tenants and landlords, commercial and residential builders and subcontractors, and their customers. "When you learn all the ins and outs you can do a better job when you see all of the perspectives," says Gengo. In cases such as landlord-tenant disputes or distressed real estate where time is of the essence, the firm endeavors to seek timely resolutions for clients. "There is nothing worse than a client having their own legal issues looming in the back of their mind," says Gengo. "Because of my creative side I don't go down normal paths, I can use both sides of my brain to come up with non-traditional ways to try to solve a problem and save clients time and expense," says Gengo. She says the firm's slogan, "Lawyers who think outside the box," sums up its approach to cases and clients.

Thinking outside the box also means it's not unusual to be met at Triangle Law Group's door by a dog. Gengo encourages clients to bring their pets to meetings at the office, another strategy for making clients feel at home. Several times a week, dogs from CareFirst Veterinary Clinic visit the firm. While playing with the dogs in the lobby, the firm's team members get a chance to get caught up with each other's caseload. "It also really helps everyone to forget about their work for about five or 10 minutes," Gengo says. It's also not unusual to walk into Gengo's personal office and find a dog there. Gengo is an avid animal lover and in her spare time, volunteers at Second Chance Pet Adoptions. Her cat, Sterling, was adopted from Second Chance. Her dog, Labby, was rescued from a Durham parking lot. Kim Wierzel, another attorney with the firm, fell in love with a puppy from CareFirst Veterinary Clinic's rescue program and took it home.

"When clients leave the office, I want them to feel like going to a lawyer was a nice experience, and that they got their questions answered and left with peace of mind," says Gengo. If creating a relaxed, professional, pet friendly law firm is an art form, Gengo is painting a masterpiece at Triangle Law Group.



Triangle Law Group Owner Laurie Gengo with Labby

Photo By Bob Friedman

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