

# Going Solo: A True Do-It-Yourself Venture

By Regina Parker

BEING YOUR OWN BOSS, MAKING YOUR own decisions, and creating that quality of life you desire are some of the benefits of running your own law firm. But going solo is not the answer for everyone.

A panel of attorneys and a business banking officer met with members of the Women in the Profession Committee and the Solo and Small Firm Committee to discuss strategies for starting your own law firm. Panelists included May Mon Post, The Post Law Firm; Deborah Weinstein, The Weinstein Firm; Alison Altman Gross, Law Office of Alison Altman Gross; Stacy N. Lilly, The Law Office of Stacy N. Lilly; and Kathleen O'Brien, business banking officer, PNC Bank.

The panelists agreed that one of the challenges of running a firm is that you may discover that you have no one to rely on but yourself. The panel members offered advice and a number of recommendations for persons interested in starting their own practice.

One of the hardest parts of going solo is being alone to handle the responsibilities of running a firm. The panelists recommended that you have a



Photo by Jeff Lyons

Kathleen O'Brien (from left), Women in the Profession Committee Co-Chair Emily B. Marks, Stacy N. Lilly, Solo and Small Firm Committee Co-Chair May Mon Post, Alison Altman Gross, Deborah Weinstein and Women in the Profession Committee Co-Chair Nikki Johnson-Huston discussed running your own law firm.

mentor, someone you can reach out to, or someone with whom you can start your firm. If you have the resources, it is recommended that you hire a legal administrator and legal assistant. This will allow you to focus on practicing while the administrator and legal assistant handle the other administrative aspects of operating the firm.

You will be required to act as the secretary, law clerk, legal assistant and office manager. The panel members agreed that administrative tasks will take up a great deal of your practice. You have to know how to deal with a number of issues, including, taxes, insurance, bookkeeping, technology and office space. Having a system in place can prevent mistakes and financial trouble.

As a solo practitioner, selling yourself is essential. The way to getting business is by establishing a good professional reputation. The panelists also recommended getting involved with professional organizations like the Philadelphia Bar Association and exploring social media as an inexpensive means to marketing yourself.

The panel members explained that a detailed business plan is necessary. It identifies a budget and assists the bank in establishing financing. The Small Business Administration has a template to use to start your own business. Depending on the nature of your practice and your book of business, you may be without income for months at a time. The panelists recommended that you keep your budget as low as possible. One example



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of keeping expenses down is establishing a home office.

There are many benefits to being a sole practitioner. However, it requires dedication and preparation in order to address and handle the pressures of starting your firm.

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## Get Admitted to U.S. Supreme Court May 23

THE PHILADELPHIA BAR ASSOCIATION will move up to 50 of our members for admission to the Bar of the United States Supreme Court on Monday, May 23. The admission ceremony will be made to the full court sitting in Washington, D.C.

The court's requirements for a group admission ceremony are very comprehensive. To review these requirements and to download the forms for admission please visit the Supreme Court's website at [supremecourtus.gov](http://supremecourtus.gov). Select the Bar Admissions tab on the left-hand side and this will bring you to the link for the Bar Admissions Form and Bar Admissions Instructions. Please read the instructions carefully. Once you have determined that you are eligible for admission, please print out and complete the Admission Form. The instructions and guidelines are very specific and must be followed scrupulously. Do not fold the application or use

staples. Use paper clips only.

Once you have successfully completed the Admission Form, please mail it along with a check made payable to the Philadelphia Bar Association. The cost to attend the ceremony is \$225 which includes your application fee and a continental breakfast. Please include an additional \$25 if you plan to bring a guest. Per the Supreme Court's rule, each inductee is permitted to bring only one guest. Please send payment to: Attn: Dawn Petit, Philadelphia Bar Association, 1101 Market St., 11th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19107. Do not send the application directly to the Supreme Court.

The event will be on a first-come, first-served basis and all applications must be received by 5 p.m. on Monday, April 4, 2011.

If you have any questions regarding this event, contact Dawn Petit at 215-238-6367 or [dpetit@philabar.org](mailto:dpetit@philabar.org).

## Anderson Museum Tour



Photo by Mark Tarasiewicz

Phyllis Sims (from left), curator of the Marian Anderson Residence Museum, is joined by Enid H. Adler, Bar Academy Co-Chair Judge A. Michael Snyder and Blanche Burton-Lyles, founder/president, Marian Anderson Historical Society, Inc. at the Academy's behind-the-scenes tour of the Museum on Feb. 3. Anderson is considered America's greatest contralto singer of the 20th century. The event featured a live performance by Marian Anderson fellows.