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MARVIN BLUM'S JOURNEY INTO THE "SOFT" SIDE OF ESTATE PLANNING

Purposeful Planning Institute
Thought Leader & Industry Innovator Series
July 6, 2021

Marvin Blum joined John A. Warnick to discuss his journey into the "soft" side of estate planning. Like most estate planning advisors, Marvin began his career focusing on the technical and tax aspects of estate planning, what he often refers to as the "head" side of estate planning. After several decades of witnessing challenging family dynamics, often fueled by inheritances passing into unprepared hands, he began to ask what could we, as planners, do to help our client families avoid these pitfalls? Marvin's focus shifted from all "head" estate planning to "head and heart" estate planning. Many of our clients are hurting, and almost all worry about what impact an inheritance will have on their heirs. We have skills to help, more than we realize, and a special seat at the table. Marvin discusses tapping into those skills to help our client families achieve multi-generational success and pass down a meaningful legacy.

Replay: [Marvin Blum's Journey into the "Soft" Side of Estate Planning](https://youtu.be/QDUQgEnXvC4) (<https://youtu.be/QDUQgEnXvC4>)

Talking Points:

1. What were some of your wake-up calls to shift you from all "head" estate planning to "head and heart estate planning?"
 - A. Several examples of heirs at war over an inheritance (issues had been swept under the rug and not addressed while G-1 was alive, then the volcano erupted when G-1 died).
 - B. Assets passing into unprepared hands (like leaving a loaded gun with no instruction manual).
 - C. FOX conference (topic of addiction).
 - D. TIGER 21 members' stories of what keeps them awake at night.
 - E. My own brother's unexpected death.
2. How did you start educating yourself on Family Legacy Planning?
 - A. Reading (Jay Hughes article "The Trustee as Mentor" was my first introduction to the world of expanded estate planning).
 - B. Attending seminars/conferences (Jim Grubman, Matt Wesley, Tom Rogerson).
 - C. Began writing articles and giving speeches; became an ambassador for the cause.
3. What are some of the lessons you learned from them?
 - A. Jay Hughes: The trustee's role in mentoring and empowering beneficiaries; peer review.
 - B. Jim Grubman: Football game analogy.
 - C. Matt Wesley: Move from quarterback to coach; 100-year families; letter from matriarch that she would rather heirs dismantle a family business than squabble over it.
 - D. Tom Rogerson: Endow the family meeting process (F.A.S.T. trust).
 - E. David Brooks: The Road to Character (Resume Marvin vs. Eulogy Marvin); The Second Mountain (importance of forming meaningful connections—that should start with your family).

4. Tell us about your weekly email series on Family Legacy Planning.
 - A. Our way of celebrating The Blum Firm's 40th anniversary.
 - B. "Soft" topics (aka "qualitative," "holistic," "heart," "family governance").

5. What is the number one piece of advice for families seeking to avoid "shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves in 3 generations?"
 - A. Plan the first family meeting (the first one is the hardest).
 - B. Then embark on regular family meetings aimed at (1) building communication and trust, and (2) educating heirs so they will be responsible inheritors.
 - C. Don't go it alone. The patriarch should be a participant. Bring in a facilitator to guide the process.

6. What role can estate planning advisors play?
 - A. We have skills we don't realize that we're not fully utilizing.
 - B. We have a special seat at the table; if we don't bring it up, who will?
 - C. Chris Erlich's advice when things get tense: Respond with love.
 - D. Conduct pre-meeting interviews to identify hot topics; place them in the "parking lot" when they come up and address them later, so as not to de-rail the process; stay initially focused on commonalities and positivity.
 - E. Provide objective guidance.
 - F. Form a committee of outside advisors and educate heirs on importance of outside advisors (or else statistics show most advisors get replaced when G-1 dies).

7. Why is it important to preserve stories of family heritage?
 - A. Research shows it builds self-esteem.
 - B. Great tool at a family meeting to tell these memories.
 - C. Stories of ancestors' resilience can help when an heir faces obstacles in life.
 - D. Blum's own stories of 4 immigrant grandparents who barely escaped Hitler and came to America with "only the knowledge between their ears" ("What you put into your mind, no one can take away from you.")

8. What the most neglected area of estate planning?
 - A. Business succession planning.
 - B. "Indispensable" owners (Charles de Gaulle: "Cemeteries are full of indispensable people.")

9. What role can philanthropy play in family legacy planning?
 - A. Laboratory for decision-making, investing, giving back.
 - B. Family "glue," especially after G-1 is gone.

10. Why is a "Family Mission Statement" important and do you have one?
 - A. Guidepost for all discretionary decisions.
 - B. Keeps family grounded and bonded.
 - C. Blum family: Relationships, productive work, spirituality (something that gives life meaning).

11. What impact has COVID-19 had on Family Legacy Planning?
 - A. Awareness of mortality.
 - B. Awareness of family dysfunction.
 - C. Convenience of Zoom for family meetings.

D. Time to focus on your legacy and a write a Legacy Letter.

12. What is a Legacy Letter?

- A. “Ethical Will,” or “Love Letter” to future generations of your family.
- B. Values, lessons, important events, information on ancestors, long-term dreams and aspirations for your family.

13. Can you share some Family Legacy Planning stories from your practice?

- A. Oil & gas client who died unexpectedly—disarray; then widow embarked on annual family meetings to keep the family connected.
- B. His business partner who learned from that and chose a successor to “ride around in the truck” with him for a few years before his death from an accident.
- C. Founder who wanted the first meeting to be a financial overview.
- D. Patriarch who wanted to tell of his successes, but kids wanted to hear of his mistakes and lessons learned.

14. Where are you now in growing this part of your practice?

- A. It’s a work-in-progress.
- B. Trying to figure out how to create in clients a “sense of urgency,” similar to how they feel about saving taxes.



MARVIN E. BLUM, JD/CPA

Marvin E. Blum is an attorney and CPA based in Fort Worth. He is Board Certified in Estate Planning and Probate Law and is a Fellow of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel.

He is known for creating customized, cutting-edge estate plans, now serving hundreds of high-net-worth families. Mr. Blum was chosen as one of the “Nation’s Top 100 Attorneys” by New York’s *Worth* magazine and was also named one of the Top 100 Super Lawyers in Texas by Thomson Reuters. Mr. Blum twice had the honor of asking questions to Warren Buffett at Berkshire-Hathaway Annual Meetings, attracting international media attention.

Mr. Blum is a highly sought-after speaker and has been quoted by *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* for his expertise on estate tax and income tax. He currently serves on the Editorial Advisory Committee for *Trusts & Estates* magazine.

Mr. Blum is dedicated to his community and volunteers his time with several non-profit organizations. He is Treasurer of the Texas Cultural Trust and serves on the Board of Directors for The Multicultural Alliance, formerly called The National Conference of Christians and Jews, a service organization fighting bias, bigotry, and racism.

Mr. Blum earned his BBA in Accounting with Highest Honors from the University of Texas, graduating first in his class. He received his law degree with High Honors from The University of Texas School of Law, graduating second in his class.

About The Blum Firm

The Blum Firm was founded in 1980 by Marvin Blum. The firm specializes in estate and tax planning and the related specialties of asset protection, business planning, business succession planning, charitable planning, family legacy planning, fiduciary litigation, and guardianship. The Blum Firm has grown to be one of the premier estate planning firms in the nation. In January 2021, The Blum Firm launched a new initiative on Family Legacy Planning as part of the firm’s emphasis on holistic estate planning.

Additional Information

An archive of the firm’s current email series on Family Legacy Planning is available [here](#).

“Changing the Playbook: How to Prepare Heirs for What’s Coming” by Marvin E. Blum, printed in the February 2016 issue of *Trusts & Estates* magazine (copy available [here](#)).

“Creating a Family Legacy: Providing Guidance for Future Generations” by Marvin E. Blum and Anna K. Selby, printed in the February 2015 issue of *Trusts & Estates* magazine (copy available [here](#)).

“A F.A.S.T. Solution to Legacy Planning—The Family Advancement Sustainability Trust” by Marvin E. Blum, Gary V. Post, and Thomas Rogerson, printed in the December 2017 issue of *Trusts & Estates* magazine (copy available [here](#)).

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