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CURTIS J. MARTIN II
ATTORNEY OF THE MONTH



CREATIVE VISIONARY

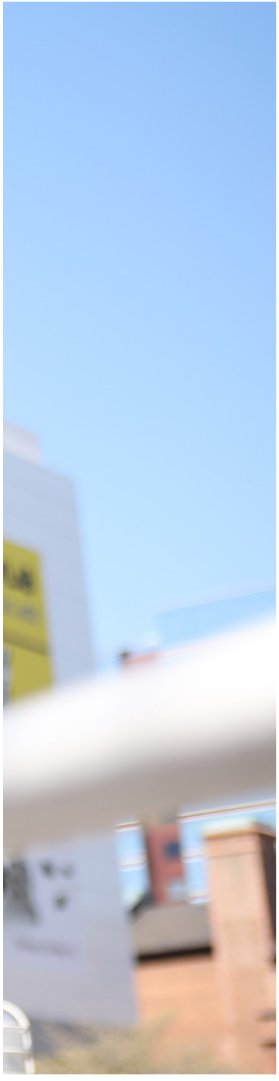
By Elaine Frances
Photography Jeremy Adamo

The Law Offices of Curtis J. Martin II were launched in April 2017 in order to provide tailored legal solutions for clients. Curtis J. Martin II practices in the areas of business and employment litigation and maintains a national practice with a diverse mix of clients ranging from start-up businesses to large corporations. For someone who completed the Running of the Bulls in Pamplona, Spain three times, launching his own law firm was less of an adventure than a logical step in the direction he sees the legal profession headed. "When you look at other industries, none of them look like they did 10, 15 or 25 years ago. However, most law firms continue to operate as they did 25, 50 or even 100 years ago. Lawyers consistently advise their clients to be innovative, yet we aren't following that same rule in the way we deliver legal services."

Martin was a partner with a prominent full-service law firm, perched in a corner office, when he received offers to go in-house from two clients. "I listened to what the clients wanted and realized that they wanted someone who understood their businesses that could not only assist with their legal solutions, but also be a part of their overall decision-making process." With over 25 years of business and legal experience, Martin's background was well-suited for the needs of these clients. He

considered the opportunities offered, then decided that he "wanted to serve those clients in a different way, but not as in-house counsel or in a captive role," he explains.

As an employment litigator, Martin represents management clients in claims involving alleged violations of federal and state laws that govern the workplace. He also counsels clients on litigation avoidance and has significant experience appearing before administrative agencies and providing representation in proceedings involving alternative dispute resolution. Martin's business law practice is focused on counseling clients on compliance and regulatory matters and pursuing and defending litigation arising from the failure of an individual or business to adhere to its contractual obligations. The firm also protects clients from acts that are intended to damage a company's business relationships and professional reputation. "A solution for one client may be absolutely wrong for another client. I tailor legal solutions by understanding the objectives of each business. As such, it's imperative that I have an intimate knowledge of the business" he says. The rural Virginia native explains that he's "at the table with his clients on a weekly basis. The decision makers bring me into their executive planning meetings and value me not just as someone who solves their legal needs, but as someone who understands their industries."



Martin is a graduate of Radford University's College of Business and Economics and his marketing degree has strongly influenced his client-centric approach for delivering legal services.

Martin is a graduate of Radford University's College of Business and Economics and his marketing degree has strongly influenced his client-centric approach for delivering legal services. As he explains, "one of the foundational principles in marketing is the recognition that your business exists because of your clients." Martin quotes Phillip Kotler, "marketing is not the art of finding ingenious ways to exhibit what you do. Marketing is the art of creating genuine value for your clients and helping them to improve." (*Principles of Marketing*). He further explains that "as a young lawyer, one of my mentors challenged me to always be able to answer the 'why' when it came to attracting and retaining clients. In other words, why

would a particular client retain my services instead of any other lawyer or firm? What level of service can I provide that differentiates me from similarly situated lawyers? The ability to answer these questions may vary for each prospective client but it provides a healthy framework and analysis for becoming a top-level service provider."

Martin spent his prior career in corporate America with IBM where his role focused on delivering world-class technical solutions to a range of businesses. He has extended that same mindset to his legal career. "My clients see me as more than just their attorney. I'm a trusted advisor invested in the long-term success of their businesses. This approach allows me to develop a deeper relationship with my clients. My experience is that the inherent constraints of a large law firm make it difficult to develop relationships of this depth. Instead of horizontal relationships, we're having vertical relationships and taking a deep-dive with our clients." The relationships that he has forged with his clients is so close, he says, that "it's no surprise for them to show up at my kids' ballgames and/or dance recitals."

Martin believes that the legal profession is changing and discussed the empirical data to support his belief. According to Martin, the "trend of partners leaving larger firms is mostly driven by a desire to provide a higher level of service to their clients. In many instances, there's more flexibility, more innovation, and fewer constraints in leaner environments. Moreover, when the client sees your desire to be malleable, it

creates a deeper level of trust." He feels very strongly that this shift in the traditional law firm model will continue as we move forward. "The only constant is change and my objective is to be adaptive while maintaining an awareness of what's transpiring around me."

In 2011, Martin was an inaugural Fellow of the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD). "There were about 130 of us in the class and we were purported to represent the next generation of law firm leaders and in-house counsel. My engagement with the LCLD allowed me to see the legal profession through a broader lens. Through that experience, I developed a strong peer group of attorneys and a network to share best practices, innovation, and knowledge. Today, we continue to support each other in the advancement of our personal and professional lives."

Martin has never viewed the legal profession as a nine to five job. "I'm recognized as an attorney whether I'm in the grocery store, the gym or at my kids' little league games." With this realization, he believes that attorneys have a unique opportunity to be impactful in their communities. One of the ways Martin tries to be impactful is through his civic engagement. He's a Past President of the Gate City Bar Association and continues to serve on several boards within the legal and civic communities. He's also passionate about mentoring diverse students at every level, from elementary school through law school. "It's important because it made a difference when I was a student. For students, it's all about being able to connect the dots. When I walk into a classroom, it's important for students to see someone who looks like them who is an attorney."

Martin has been listed on numerous Who's Who Lists and was named a "Rising Star" by *Georgia Super Lawyers* for several years. He has also been profiled by multiple national publications for his leadership and legal acumen. When he talks about the people who mentored him, he starts with his parents. "My father was in the military, so I grew up in an environment that was disciplined and there was a natural expectation that you were going to perform at your highest level. He always said that, along with a strong work ethic, the most important characteristic for



success at any level was to be accountable and to do what you say you're going to do. Through the years, I saw that example through both of my parents, so it became only natural to emulate it."

Martin is considered by many to be a true renaissance person based upon his profound love for history and the arts. He is a painter and accomplished musician, who enjoys writing poetry and short stories. He's also a voracious reader and prefers anything related to the Harlem Renaissance Era or Ernest Hemingway. He also enjoys traveling and says that "if you want to know where I'm going to travel next, just look at what I'm reading." Ernest Hemingway has inspired much of his travel including his visits to Pamplona, Spain and recent trips to Cuba.

Martin and his wife Mary have two children who he describes as "his everything." He says that their son, Curtis "Justus" Martin III (age 11) and daughter Sydney Martin (age 9), "are quite the dynamic duo and bring a tremendous amount of joy to our lives." Both parents serve in leadership roles at their children's elementary school where Martin is also Chair of the School Governance Council. According to Martin, "it is important for us to be invested in our children's education and serve as an example just as our parents did for both of us." Martin says that "for most people in the Milton/Alpharetta area he's simply known as Syd and Jus' dad." Based upon the smile on his face, I think he's just fine with that description.

AT A GLANCE

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April 2017

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Business Litigation

Employment Litigation

Professional Accomplishments:

Savoy Magazine, Most Influential Black Lawyers in America, 2015

Who's Who in Black Atlanta, 2009-2010, 2012-2016 editions

Georgia Super Lawyers® Rising Star, 2010-2014

Recipient of the National Bar Association President's Award, 2012

President of the Gate City Bar Association, 2011

Who's Who In Law and Accounting, Atlanta Business Journal, 2011

Fellow of the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity, 2011

Fellow of the American Bar Foundation, 2011

Atlanta Business Journal's "40 On The Rise", 2010

Reflecting on the first anniversary of his firm, Martin anticipates continued expansion driven by the needs of his clients. However, he provides that "our growth will reflect the quality of service that we're able to deliver to our clients. We must remain committed to the same value system and vision that led to the formation of this firm. I'm excited about the future and the opportunity to serve those who entrust their most critical legal needs to The Law Offices of Curtis J. Martin II."