

# Poll spurs local lawyers to ponder other avenues

By **HEATHER FLETCHER**

PORT WASHINGTON – Ganesh, the elephant-headed god, perched silently in the corner of Arnie Herz's office, presiding over the lawyer's mediation table as water bubbled over stones in a nearby fountain.

The golden statue, a gift from a client, served as the only judge over the oval meeting space and seemed to be living proof of the mythological figure's powers to remove obstacles and bestow blessings.

Herz, 43, has realized his dream, evolving from a litigator for sports clients at a major Manhattan law firm to a partner at a Wall Street practice, and then, five years ago, to a solo practitioner who can do practically anything he wants.

A lawyer, mediator, Internet blogger, speaker and author, Herz still manages to practice yoga three times a week. He works six minutes from home and was even able recently to lead a yoga lesson at the nursery school for his 3-year-old son, Gabriel. Afterward, Herz returned to his office, still clad in a T-shirt and sweatpants.

A recent survey by legal staffing firm Robert Half Legal of Menlo Park, Calif., revealed that many lawyers share Herz's dream to become a mediator. The staffing firm asked 200 attorneys with at least three years of experience – and among the 1,000 largest law firms and corporations in the United States – what law-related careers they would like to pursue if they were to change careers.

Allowed two answers, 54 percent of those polled chose mediation, 49 percent picked law professorships and 41 percent

decided on legal services in the public interest or for not-for-profits.

Other choices in the annual survey, released March 17, included expert witness, patent expert, researcher and politician. Not included in the survey were those whose chosen career alternatives veered away from law or never got there in the first place.

"I think if you can create a law practice that's harmonious with your life, the need for radical change isn't so important," Herz said.

The main reason he left his Manhattan partnership? To have more personal time, which he devotes to his wife

and three children. But he thinks that many lawyers consider leaving the profession because of a deep dissatisfaction. It can be easy for attorneys to get "caught up in the human drama" their clients bring into their offices and lose track of their own needs, he said.

A year before leaving his partnership, Herz stepped back and envisioned his ideal life. He wondered how he would be living in the next two years if he could have anything he wanted.

"You're looking at it right now," Herz said, widening his deep-set brown eyes for emphasis. "It's manifested."

For his colleague and friend David Abeshouse, who has a solo practice in Uniondale, the perfect balance between business litigation and arbitration-mediation is about 75-to-25. But Abeshouse, formerly a partner at the Great Neck law firm of Ackerman, Levine, Cullen, Brickman & Limmer,

wanted to make sure that when he left five years ago to pursue his own practice he could also more vigorously pursue a personal life.

A musician who prefers the clarinet and saxophone, Abeshouse still serves on the board of the not-for-profit professional orchestra he once headed, the New York Virtuosi Chamber Symphony. "If I'd been a partner in a firm, that would've been harder for me to do," he said.

Then there are those who earn juris doctorates and find employment nirvana by using legal knowledge in what many deem an unrelated field.

Take Frank L. Marcantonio, who never entered a law firm but used his diploma at the state department, in litigation support work for attorneys and then, in the past 20 years, working on sales and marketing for the business he



**Arnie Herz**



**PURVEYOR OF DREAMS: A statue of Ganesh, the elephant-headed Hindu god, takes in the view at Arnie Herz's office – and appears to have lived up to its power of bestowing blessings.**

co-owns, Seaport Title Agency of Freeport. Marcantonio's law degree helps ensure real estate closings and property refinancing deals are performed legally. "I used that background for whatever I was doing," he said.

## Arnie Herz

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