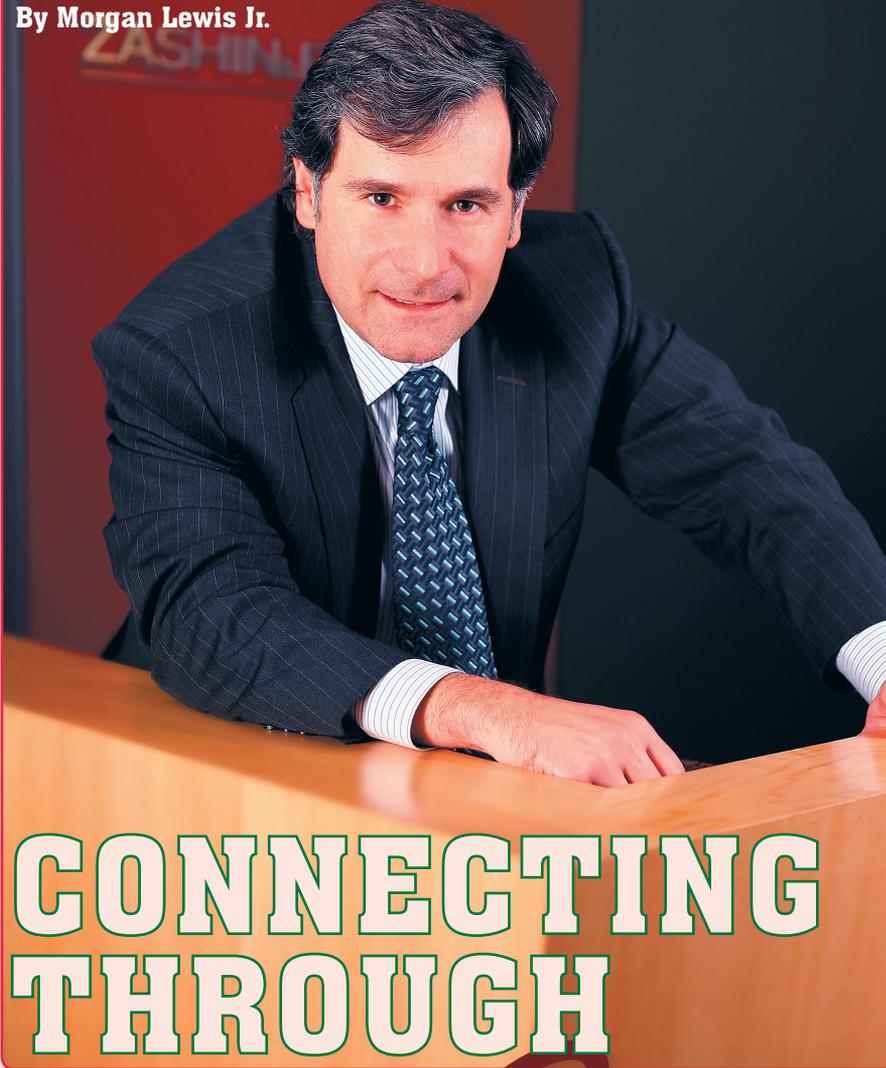


Andrew Zashin

Andrew Zashin minimizes the damage created by divorce and child custody battles by listening to his clients' goals.

By Morgan Lewis Jr.



CONNECTING THROUGH

It's almost absurd to hear Andrew Zashin talk about his fear of becoming a "legal robot."

The animated 39-year-old co-managing partner of Cleveland's family, labor and employment relations firm Zashin & Rich Co. LPA speaks in a rapid-fire patter, jumps from his chair or rolls in it across the room to illustrate a point. He's not exactly mechanical.

"If you're a legal robot, you're just not going to do good law," says Zashin, thumping the conference table with his fist for emphasis in his Public

Square office. "If there's a lack of sensitivity, if there's an inability to appreciate people's feelings, that's a big problem."

Knowledge of human emotions is almost as important as legal expertise

for attorneys in Zashin's practice. He and his colleagues concentrate on some of life's most difficult processes: divorce, marriage dissolution, child custody disputes and property division. When families collapse, Zashin has to act as not only an attorney, but part psychologist, business adviser and social worker all at the same time.

"Connecting with people is a talent," Zashin says. "I'm not sure how well it can be learned, but it's something we've done well. If we didn't have that secret ingredient, I'm not sure we'd be where we are today."

Although he runs a firm with 20 attorneys, 35 employees and a Columbus satellite office, he's also the father of four children, ages 2 to 10 years old, and teaches a family law class at Case Western Reserve University, his law school alma mater. You wonder where he finds the energy.

"The discipline yields dramatic rewards," the Shaker Heights resident says of his busy life. "You change the way you live and you change what's important to you and you change your priorities."

But Zashin is no angel and not exactly an idealist. In his class at Case, his third-year law students often begin the course with the fantasy in their minds that family law

Separation

will be like a TV lawyer soap opera, or that it will help them change the world. Those dreams don't last long.

"Both of these people are in for a profound disappointment," says Zashin. "Because it's none of these things. It's a lot of ugly social work and it's a lot of ugly law and it's very

IZABELA VIKTORIA

hard, and often times the result isn't very pretty."

Just when it sounds like his nearly 15 years as one of the region's top divorce attorneys is starting to wear him down, his optimism appears.

"Divorce is a destroyer," Zashin says. "It's a destroyer of lives; it's a destroyer of children; it's a destroyer of emotion and families; and it's a destroyer of wealth. But there are some times where you are able to think out of the box and you can do

people and generations a world of good."

Zashin joined the firm in 1993 after law school. Zashin & Rich was founded by Andrew's father, Robert, in 1981. Although Andrew didn't feel pressure to become an attorney, the Pepper Pike native always knew it would be his destiny after years of watching his father, who before forming the firm was a trial referee in Cuyahoga County's domestic relations court.

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"I grew up with people calling the home at all hours and screaming," says Zashin, who fields calls like those from clients on his personal cell phone. "My father was a divorce lawyer before there really were divorce lawyers. It's been in my blood."

In 1997, Zashin's younger brother and fellow Case Law grad, Stephen, 37, joined the firm to launch its Employment and Labor practice group, an area that has surpassed the firm's Family Relations group in terms of size. Stephen is also co-managing partner at the firm.

"Andrew excels in family law because he listens to his clients' goals," Stephen says. "He regularly puts his ego aside in order to achieve the results his clients desire. Andrew is aggressive, caring, responsive and incredibly thorough."

After watching countless marriages fall apart, Andrew's experience has taught him what it takes to keep his own 14-year marriage to his wife, Lisa, together.

"You always have to feel like you're sacrificing even more than your spouse or your children," Zashin says. "If you can't live with that selflessness, then don't get married and don't have kids. ... Why do marriages fall apart? At the root, it's always selfishness." ✎



Congratulations to Andrew A. Zashin who was named one of Worth Magazine's "100 Top Attorneys" in the United States

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