

# THE LAWYERS WEEKLY

## Magically balancing two careers

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Do you ever wish you could turn a bad day around? Maybe by pulling a rabbit out of a hat? Or amazing and delighting the naysayers with smoke and mirrors?

Well, you could — literally — if you were Kent Wong, a sole practitioner at Edmonton's Highfield Law Office. That's because Kent is a professional magician. He travels to many destinations — local and international, spreading good feelings and astounding audiences.

Admitted to the Alberta bar in 1994, Kent knew from a young age that a law practice was in his future. As for his choice to restrict his practice to real estate, Kent says that he tried general litigation, but found it wasn't a good fit for him. As many of us have perhaps felt at one time or another, "the time lines didn't fit me, the stress load didn't fit me... and I found that I was taking some of the stress home, [which] wasn't good for the family." So, when he started his own practice, he decided to use the opportunity to start practising what he really enjoys.

Kent also knew early that his life would involve magic. He was visiting San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf with his parents when he was five or six, and stepped into a magic shop there. That was the moment he remembers becoming hooked on magic. By the age of 10, Kent was doing paid shows and parties. Many years later, Kent was still practising magic and doing shows, and the money he earned from those gigs helped him pay his law school tuition.



Kent Wong

The years of hard work have obviously paid off. Kent is a member of the prestigious Magic Castle in Hollywood, an exclusive magic club where membership is reserved for only those passing a rigorous audition process. Members come from all over the world to perform there.

The symbiotic relationship between Kent's two halves — law and magic — is not as strange a mix as one might think. Kent says both require heavy preparation and efficient execution. Both require a level of trust and confidence between performer and audience. Both require skill in effective communication.

And when law and magic overlap — for instance, when his clients (or more likely, their children) want to see a card trick or two on their way out of his office — that's okay with Kent. He says the fact that he has a double life has not affected his credibility in either the legal or the magic camp.

In fact, it's exactly the opposite. He has the respect of his magic colleagues, who come to him for corporate legal opinions; and he says magic helps make his real estate clients more comfortable, taking the stress out of the lawyer visit. Kent says magic allows him to connect with his clients by helping him create a non-intimidating place with "a nice, cozy family feel about it."

Kent also adds community service into an already busy schedule. He visits with and performs for sick kids through both the Make-a-Wish Foundation and the Kids with Cancer Society. Last year, he created a successful school fundraising scheme for local public schools. It involves Kent and two other performers offering their variety act as a pre-packaged and easy way for schools to fundraise risk-free.

Kent also teaches magic to children, hoping to instill in them the benefits that he has gained from his magic career. He likes to emphasize to his students and their parents that practising magic helps kids develop the personal attributes "that can take you a long way in life generally" — things like increased self-confidence, public speaking skills, the ability to organize thoughts and communicate them coherently and a hard work ethic.

Kent's life is set up for optimum flexibility to indulge in both sides of himself — making magic and practising law his way. He does 180 paid magic shows per year (in fact, when The Lawyers Weekly caught up with him, he was just back from a weekend of shows in Las Vegas) and still manages to

practise law full-time. He says that doing magic after a hard day at the office helps to “balance out the stresses” and clear his mind. “When I’m doing a magic trick,” he says, “I can’t think about the law.”

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