



## Fellow Profile

### **Andrew Z. Adkins**

#### **How did you get started in the legal profession?**

I'm actually an electronics engineer; I have a BS and an ME degree and I worked as an engineer in industry for seven years. My father was a lawyer in Gainesville FL for 36 years and my uncle, James C. Adkins, was a Florida Supreme Court Justice. When I started consulting with lawyers in 1989, the name "Adkins" had a good reputation and it helped me open a lot of doors. Of course, neither my father nor my uncle used computers, so the rest was left up to me.

#### **How did you end up in your current position?**

The life of a consultant, very similar to a solo practitioner, is a "peak and valley" and "feast or famine" environment. There are good months and some not so good months. Back in 1996/1997, the University of Florida College of Law had a new dean, Richard Matasar, who came from Chicago-Kent College of Law. I didn't know Dean Matasar, but I knew the technology reputation of Chicago-Kent. I formulated a plan, "Legal Technology Institute Blueprint Plan," that I brought to Dean Matasar outlining an institute for promoting technology in the legal profession. It would be self-funded (through consulting) and I would be the director. We established the Legal Technology Institute at the University of Florida Levin College of Law in October 1997. It is self-funded and we continue to provide technology consulting services to the legal profession.

Four years ago, I was asked by the law school Dean to take over as the Director of Technology with several major projects in mind. I was happy to assist (it's always good when you're wanted). I've been doing both

positions (Director, LTI and IT Director) for four years. It is a constant balance of time and professionalism, but I think I make it work both professionally and personally.

#### **What has been the most surprising aspect of your career?**

It took me a while to figure out that each job/position in my career has been a stepping stone. I was in the Navy for four years; my training as a firefighter in the Navy led me to a job in Gainesville as a firefighter. I went to school at the same time to get my degree. I've been trained as an electronics engineer, but don't currently do any engineering work per se. However, the experience in my education and industry have provided me with some significant insights into workflow and project management in technology that help me understand and direct my clients in their technology decisions.

#### **What has changed the most during your career?**

Technology is always changing, sometimes for the better, but not always. There are always pros and cons. Take the Internet, for example. When I started consulting, there was an Internet, but there was no World Wide Web; obviously that changed within a few years. There is so much good the Internet has brought to our society and world in so many ways. The ability to instantly "travel" anywhere in the world through pictures and text is phenomenal. The ability to share information to many people simultaneously is phenomenal. But, we've also got to put up with the "not so good stuff," such as terrorism, pornography, and hate crimes. Of course, this stuff existed before; it's just now easier to do through the Internet.

**What's the most satisfying aspect of your job?**

As a consultant, I often don't see the end result for a few months to a year after the engagement. But, when I go back to a law firm and the executive director and managing partner bring me in to "show off" their technology "just like we pictured it" is truly a reward. Getting a phone call from a solo practitioner a few months after we talked about technology and s/he tells me "how much better their practice is," is truly a reward. As the IT Director at the UF Levin College of Law, rewards come daily with students, faculty, and staff. When I or my staff are able our customers through a technology problem or help them find an innovative way to conduct research or communicate with students, that is also very rewarding.

**If you weren't in the legal profession, what would you do?**

I often kid with my wife about "mowing lawns." It's physical activity (as opposed to sitting in front of a computer all day), you're working outside in fresh air and sunshine, and when you get done, you have immediate gratification.

This is a hard question to ask, especially for someone my age. I've never been concerned with finding a job and I have all the confidence in my abilities to do most anything. As I mentioned earlier, everything (to me) is a stepping stone. I recently published a book on my father's experiences in World War II ("You Can't Get Much Closer Than This," Casemate Publishing). Where this goes, who knows, but I'm currently working on another book.

**Where do you expect to be in five years?**

My goal is to retire from "active" work before I'm 60. Can I do that? Who knows, but it's a goal. I've also been talking with someone over the last few months about helping to create a legal technology consulting company, outside of the normal consultants/integrators. If that occurs, then I probably won't ever retire.

**Is there anything else you'd like to mention?**

I'm very flattered to first, be a fellow of the College and second, to be asked to participate in this profile.

**Do you have any suggestions for the College?**

I think it important to continuously let the College members know what's going on within the College of LPM. Communications is key, especially to an organization like the College of LPM. The knowledge and experience of the College is built upon the knowledge and experience of its members.