

March 2021

# Paradigm

President's Podium:

## Positioning Primerus

### Navigating a Legal World Changed by COVID-19

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### Schneider Smeltz Spieth Bell LLP

Cleveland, Ohio



Schneider Smeltz Spieth Bell LLP (SSSB) is one of Ohio's most respected full-service law firms. With experience dating back to 1867, the firm focuses on delivering excellent client service by providing forward-thinking and creative solutions to complex legal problems.

The firm consistently earns recognition for its service to the legal, business and philanthropic communities. One of the most recent and notable highlights is SSSB's selection to be listed regionally by *U.S. News* as a "Best Law Firm" in eight practice areas. Ten of the firm's lawyers are recognized in the 2021 edition of *The Best Lawyers in America*. Additionally, six attorneys have been listed as 2021 Ohio Super Lawyers® and three attorneys to the 2021 Ohio Rising Stars® list. The firm is also proud of the number of attorneys who are Fellows with the prestigious American College of Trust and Estate Counsel.

As part of its business philosophy, SSSB has focused on succession planning with and for its clients. In 2020, David Lenz was elected as the firm's managing partner, and is among the youngest law firm leaders in Northeast Ohio. SSSB prides itself in taking steps towards a multi-generational approach to best serve the needs of clients, today and for the future. As a further testament to the firm's culture and environment, it was recognized as a 2020 Top Workplace by *The Plain Dealer*.

The legal team at SSSB is more than 25 attorneys strong, licensed to practice in five states and Canada, focusing on business law, real estate, litigation, family law, taxation and trusts and estates. Each member of the firm is committed to providing dedicated, thoughtful and practical solutions to our clients.



Aanchal Sharma

**Aanchal Sharma**, a partner at Schneider Smeltz Spieth Bell LLP, practices in the areas of business and commercial litigation and commercial real estate law. Her work is focused on business entities and financial institutions involved in contract disputes and business tort claims, as well as commercial real estate disputes. This focus has successfully expanded to include the more specialized area of trust, estate and probate litigation.



## OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM



David M. Lenz



James R. Bright



Kenneth J. Laino



Jennifer A. Savage

## OUR LITIGATION TEAM



Amanda A. Barreto



Mark M. Mikhael



Ryan P. Nowlin



Scott J. Robinson



Aanchal Sharma



James D. Vail



Nicholas M. Vento

Even our marketing strategy shifted dramatically to increase our communications with clients and to deliver additional value by helping businesses pivot toward reset and recovery.

## Moving Forward Facing the Reality of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has forever changed the practice of any modern law firm. In my case, hearings, depositions and trials have all gone virtual in some form. In fact, client meetings are easier to coordinate by video platforms than ever before. And the investments our firm made in technology, including remote login systems and video conferencing, have more than paid off. Even our marketing strategy shifted dramatically to increase our communications with clients and to deliver additional value by helping businesses pivot toward reset and recovery.

At first, we attempted to gain as much knowledge as we could for our clients on the various forms of coronavirus relief packages that were being implemented by local, state and federal government agencies. Then came tolling orders affecting all facets of our litigation practice from assessing statutes of limitations to filing deadlines. We updated our clients on their options there, too.

Next, I was able to leverage more unique marketing and thought leadership opportunities. I found myself writing and speaking on topics that were timely and relevant. The most interesting experience was a request to provide legal commentary to a local news broadcast for a virtual TV appearance. The discussion revolved around guidance for parents who were being asked to sign waivers for their children to go back to school for in-person learning. Here's a link to the segment:

[linkedin.com/posts/schneider-smeltz-spieth-bell-llp\\_as-some-districts-defy-county-health-guidelines-activity-6696971340630515712-32BR](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/schneider-smeltz-spieth-bell-llp_as-some-districts-defy-county-health-guidelines-activity-6696971340630515712-32BR)

This was the reality of our clients, colleagues and friends. I quickly realized that in-person public education was one very large piece of the backbone of the employees of any employer, including my own law firm. This sparked our firm to quickly mobilize to accommodate our valued

staff and employees while providing practical and creative solutions for our clients to help their team members. The reality is, if your employee must juggle full-time employment and full-time childcare responsibilities, how can they function efficiently at either task? Most of those solutions started with a simple premise – understand individual circumstances, accommodate and manage employer expectations accordingly.

This strategy has helped to foster engagement to fortify employer-employee relationships for our firm and clients. This same strategy translated into our working relationships with third-party vendors, opposing counsel and even referral sources.

Everyone is adjusting to the new normal. In an age of social distancing, when I am on a virtual call with someone at their home and their child, elderly parent or cat walks across the background of the screen, our communication is often tinged with humor as we acknowledge these unplanned “cameos.”

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