



# **FAIRWAY DIVORCE**

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# **FAIRWAY DIVORCE SOLUTIONS**

Mediation alternative



Beginning in 2006, Fairway Divorce Solutions® was born like many startup companies — based on personal experience and a desire to fill a need in the market. At that time, Karen Stewart, CEO of Fairway Divorce Solutions, had recently gone through a separation.

**UPSET WITH THE** norm of traditional divorce proceedings, and saddled with legal bills totaling more than \$500,000, Stewart felt the traditional system lacked strategy and methodology — it isn't resolution-based. Feeling this time would be better spent on mediation rather than con-

flict and litigation, Stewart began to resolve.

"Just because I had a bad experience wasn't enough for me to justify a company," Stewart told *The Canadian Business Journal*. "I hired a company to research if there were other people who had the experience I had, or had witnessed it as a third party. The research came back with everything I was feeling, all the negative parts of the present system and all the opportunity to fix it. It was confirmed in the survey."

From there, Stewart began formulating the methodology, working to develop the model and brand of Fairway Divorce Solutions, launching





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the first office six years ago and the first franchise four years ago.

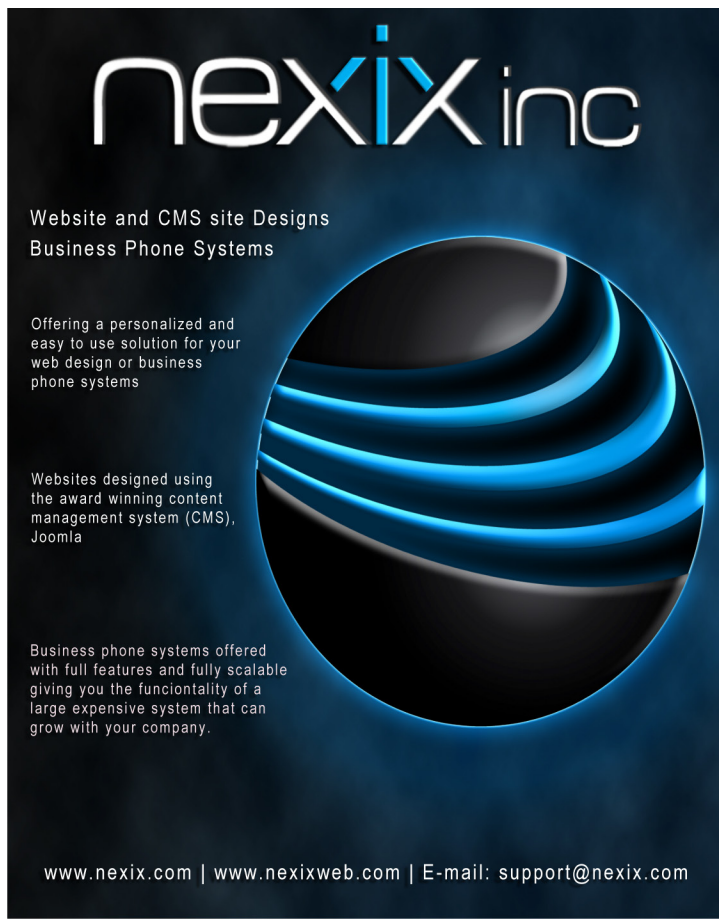
## Impacting business

With the overriding goal to reduce both cost and time of separation proceedings, Fairway Divorce Solutions strives to minimize the impact of divorce in two key areas: to the individuals personally and to business. “Raising the bar” in offering mediation, rather than the traditional adversarial method, has pushed Fairway Divorce Solutions to the front of the pack.

“We’re causing a call to action for businesses to increase the education and awareness about

this alternative that if used by their divorcing employees, can help not only the employee but businesses to not be as dramatically impacted by divorce,” explained Mary Krauel, Mississauga franchisee of Fairway Divorce Solutions. “We’re working with businesses to connect with people in our communities to help with that awareness.”

The process of Fairway Divorce Solutions minimizes the divorce and separation timeline. Rather than waiting in the legal system, having your life on hold, and watching your stress level increase, Fairway Divorce Solutions shortens this time significantly, from the initial full financial



disclosure to a final resolution plan, wrapped up in 120 days. Fairway Divorce Solutions completes the entire process in four months, something that averages four years, 10 times as much, in the traditional system. Notably, the shortened timeline also promotes cost savings as well, typically costing \$5,000 per party, rather than the traditional norm which can exceed \$25,000 per side.

“Our process strips away the emotion and people are better able to make sound, informed decisions and not from a place of fear,” Krauel summarized.

Businesses are affected by divorce. Recent research is quantifying the cost of divorce to em-

ployers that are a result of emotional downtime, lack of effectiveness, time away from the office and the impact on co-workers. Fairway Divorce Solutions strives to educate employers and Human Resources professionals to take a more active role in reducing the negative economic impact that divorce has on business. One way is to consider the effects of divorce on employees in corporate wellness programs and offer support for mediation through Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).

With a background in finance, Stewart felt divorce took away from business and even had a negative cost on business. “Money and





the division of assets is the primary focus and concern for those moving through divorce. Incomes, careers, and assets are at risk so it is important to ensure that when dividing assets both the short-term and long-term consequences are considered.”

## Company growth

From Day 1, the idea behind Fairway Divorce Solutions was to be multinational, not stay local. As such, the company has established a presence in both Canada and the United States. The first year of operation saw Fairway Divorce Solutions focus on its premiere office, based in Calgary, but also

planning for expansion, launching its franchising model two years later in 2008. The company expanded into the United States the following year and now has 10 franchise offices in Canada and another five franchise offices in the United States.

Becky Shook, a Sacramento-based franchisee of Fairway Divorce Solutions, believes in the primary function of the company, which is to protect children during separation and divorce, advocating for a co-parenting process. “We’re helping to decide what the schedule looks like and how they will parent together. What we’re finding is that people are more co-operative when they learn that they do not want the court process



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deciding the fate of their children. Co-parenting is a tremendous challenge to the status quo.”

Krauel added, “Divorce is not what causes the impact on children. How parents deal with the divorce process by resolving matters, how they communicate, and how they engage their children has the dramatic impact on families and children. Our process helps and guides parents to make better decisions that protects and considers the best interests of the children. It is one of the cornerstones that I found most appealing when I chose to acquire a franchise.”

Fairway Divorce Solutions is still a “baby” as a franchise company, a very young company in the corporate international world. Nevertheless, the company realizes the rich opportunity that lies ahead particularly because of its unique model in the divorce and separation industry. Its concept of a mediation alternative is receiving a lot of push from the marketplace and Fairway Divorce Solutions is well positioned to move forward and attain a greater market share.

With Fairway Divorce Solutions positively impacting generations to come, Stewart summarized, “We’re doing what we’re passionate about, which is about making a difference in people’s lives.” **CBJ**

- One in three Canadian marriages results in divorce or separation, and more than half will involve dependent children
- Only 63 per cent of American children grow up in a two parent, heterosexual home, the lowest figure in the western world
- In North America, 1 million new children will live in a single parent home this year
- In 2005, 7.8 million Americans paid about \$40 billion in child and/or spousal support
- Estimates of \$6 billion is lost by North American businesses due to decreased productivity stemming from marriage and relationship difficulties (Forthofer, Markham, Cox, Stanley and Kessler, 1996)
- Divorce can disrupt productivity of the worker for more than 3 years (Lavy, 2002)



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