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Thinking Long Term

Sona Tatiyants of [Lynk Law](#) specializes in helping young professionals plan their estates.

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GLENDALE — Sona Tatiyants sees herself as the calm in the storm that her clients are going through when family members die.

"I recently lost a client who was in his 40s. That's very difficult because his wife has two children who are my kids' age," said Tatiyants, the founding partner of Lynk Law Inc. and a specialist in planning and administering estates. "She came here with the kids. It was just heartbreaking for us. She just went through something horrible, but I need to be a rock for her."

For Tatiyants, the best way to handle the emotional turbulence of her work is by creating a warm, family-oriented office. Replete with toys, games, an iPad, and a bountiful supply of sweet desserts, clients feel free to bring their children to the office. Tatiyants said she and her colleagues often do so themselves.

Tatiyants has had the vision of a firm with a strong community focus from the start. Two weeks into a master of laws degree program at Loyola Law School, she became pregnant with her first daughter. Fittingly, the course of studies lasted nine months and she was pregnant throughout.

"I had the idea of starting a firm for young families ... because I was going to have a young child," she said of the founding of Lynk Law. "A lot of estate planning was done for much larger estates. Bigger firms handle it. I thought it would just be very interesting to have a niche of younger families."

Since starting her practice alone in 2010, Tatiyants has expanded it to include of counsel Caroline Borncamp, associate Kim Jackson, a full staff, and a book of nearly 800 clients. In doing so, she carved out her niche: a network of young families with working professional parents in their 30s, 40s, and 50s.

"I think my age really helps to

attract those kind of clients, because people are looking for someone who will be around for a long time," she said. "I've been doing this enough where I've been practicing 12 years and know what I'm doing, but at the same time I'm not going to retire any time soon."

While taking on a younger crop of clients, Lynk Law has been at the forefront of what attorney Robert A. Cohen of Cohen Law APLC calls a "new wave of estate planning in the 21st century."

"A lot of estate planning attorneys would perceive their relationship with their clients as one-off opportunities to do planning and they may or may not ever see their clients again," said Cohen. "Sona has really led the charge of this revolution in estate planning, which tends to create a long-lasting relationship with their clients. ... She is looking at the lifespan of her practice as being the lifespan of her clients."

Tatiyants publishes a monthly newsletter and reaches out to clients every three years, asking them if their assets, relationships, or postdeath wishes have changed.

Even if nothing has changed, Tatiyants is willing to sit down with clients for free to make sure their estates still make sense. She would rather know if a client gets, for example, a new house or an inheritance so the firm can advise them on the implications of such transactions ahead of time.

"When you work with a lawyer from a bigger firm on something, once that's done, that's done," said Sean Bangert, a client of Lynk Law who is also an attorney working as in-house counsel at Viacom Inc. "He's not your lawyer forever. But with Sona, I feel like I'm a constant client."

With this work, Lynk Law attorneys are charged with making clients discuss one of life's biggest taboos: money. For Tatiyants, who said she loves to learn about how people think about money, the key to getting clients to



Juliane Backmann / Special to the Daily Journal

Sona Tatiyants of [Lynk Law](#) Inc. at her office in Glendale

open up is making them comfortable.

"My first meetings are always getting to know each other," she said. "So I'll say this is a good chance for us to get to know each other. You tell me about you. I tell you about me. We see if we're a good fit and we'll want to work together. I put them at ease and people usually want to spill everything with me because they realize, 'Oh my God, I've never talked to anyone about this.'"

Tatiyants uses a personality test called DiSC when she hires new employees. The test divides people into categories depending on types of personal attributes they prefer, like dominance, influence, steadiness, and conscientiousness.

She's used the tool so much that she sees where clients fall within the test without administering it to them and uses that insight to guide the conversation, especially when navigating the sometimes tumultuous politics of a couple's finances. The key there: finding out who is in charge of the money.

"There's always someone in charge of making money decisions," Tatiyants joked. "And it's not necessarily the person making more money."

Melissa Weinberger, a partner at Touchton & Weinberger LLP, noticed Tatiyants' skillful touch when she worked with the firm as a client.

Weinberger went to Lynk Law to set up her family's estate plan, trust

and wills, and felt Tatiyants made talking about difficult subjects like the possible death or incapacitation of her spouse and decision of who would take care of her children in the event that she and her husband died an easy process.

"She makes those subjects easy to talk about," Weinberger said. "[Tatiyants] has a great way about her and she is compassionate. She's genuine and that comes through. She also has a great sense of humor."

Weinberger liked Tatiyants so much that the two became good friends.

This happens regularly with Tatiyants, whose office walls are plastered with personal holiday cards from clients-turned-friends. She uses her firm to create a "family" — a network of young professionals, often recommending pediatricians, dentists, accountants and other lawyers.

Tatiyants' network grew to be so big that she helped found a networking group of over 150 small young business owners, lawyers, accountants, consultants and nonprofit directors. The group, The Exchange LA, has grown to include over eight regional chapters in Southern California.

"I like to think of our firm as the link to other people around you," Tatiyants said. "I like to be the essential link in referring clients to other people. I know people and I can put them in touch with the right people."