

'I Like Working With People Whose Hair Is on Fire'

Tom Curzon keeps his cool—at work and on the taekwondo mat



Tom Curzon does not fluster easily.

After all, this is a man accustomed to flying kicks aimed at his face.

"You learn in martial arts that when you are fighting or sparring you have to be able to relax in the face of danger," says Curzon, with Osborn Maledon in Phoenix, who is a fourth-degree black belt in taekwondo. "That's how you can be quick and powerful. That applies as a lawyer. Staying calm, cool and collected in a tense situation can be extremely helpful."

Not that many of his clients even know about the punch-and-kick lessons that the 55-year-old totes with him into a conference room. They're usually entrepreneurs with big ideas and tons of energy, often in the high-technology field, and to them he's just the slightly built business lawyer with the

preternatural calm and sound advice. He lets them be the volatile ones. "I like working with people whose hair is on fire," he says. "People who have a vision and an energy to make things happen."

A championship debater and valedictorian in high school, Curzon initially wanted to be a trial lawyer. At least that was the plan after graduating from the University of Texas School of Law in 1979. But after 18 months at Osborn Maledon he realized he didn't like it. "Someone in the firm suggested I try corporate work, which I had never considered," he says. "I found I loved it as much as I hated litigation. And I never looked back."

He is now knee-deep in helping clients grow and build their companies. Some require venture-capital counsel. Others

need M&A direction. Licensing and distribution issues come up a lot. There's a lot to absorb.

"He's good at triage," explains Bill Hardin, Curzon's co-partner in the practice.

And he continues to push himself, even when he's outside the office. Along with taekwondo, which he practices under the tutelage of Master David Karstadt (his wife, Anne, and sons Danny and Peter have also joined him on the mat through the years), he also loves to jump on his mountain bike or snowboard. It seems like anything with a hint of danger will do.

"I do these things for me," he says. "It's how I continue to grow personally. That's never going to stop."

—David Schwartz