

Millennial Engineer Takes a Roundabout Route to the Law

By Carol Robidoux

Ian Reardon approaches his practice as a Portsmouth divorce attorney with the precision of an engineer. That's because, before he was a divorce attorney, he was an engineer.

A child of the '80s who loved taking apart his parents' computers and rebuilding them, Reardon never really questioned his destiny as a software engineer. But he soon learned that life in a cubicle didn't satisfy his interest in people, and in making a difference in people's lives.

For Reardon, everything changed when, through a twist of fate, he entered law school.

He shared a cubicle with a fellow engineer in Boston who happened to be a law student. Then, Reardon's wife was called to testify in court, and he went along.

"It really engaged me, the whole process. I felt like this is something that really mattered. That, and knowing my co-worker was doing it, really got me interested in law, and the light bulb just went on," Reardon says.

He enrolled in law school in 2006. To make ends meet, he and his wife, Katie, capitalized on his tech skills and decided to launch a folk-art sales business.

"We bought like \$2,000-worth of folk art and built a site and started trying to sell these things on the Internet. We gave all the folk art to Goodwill in the end," says

Reardon. "But we learned how to run a business and sell things online."

That led them to try a second online business.

"My wife's father is a lobster fisherman in Maine, so we started selling live lobsters online. I used my search engine background to get our site to rank high, and we were shipping fresh-caught lobster the same day they came off the boat, all over the country," says Reardon.

"So, I went from engineer to law student to someone shucking lobsters at night, and I was commuting back and forth to law school on the subway. One of the issues I had was getting an apartment in Boston. So in my spare time I developed another business, myapartmentmap.com, a website that plotted apartments on Google maps. You can find those kinds of sites now readily, but it was the first one of its kind back then," says Reardon.

Reardon graduated in 2009 from Suffolk University Law, but didn't take the bar exam right away – his business was doing so well that he wanted to see where it might take him.

However, within the next year Reardon suffered an unexpected setback – the first of a series of grand mal epileptic seizures. He was 28 at the time.

"They happened out of nowhere, no family history, nothing. I was unable to drive for two years because of it, so my wife

had to take me everywhere I needed to go. I also suffered a period of memory loss and developed an anxiety disorder, which was directly related to the epilepsy," says Reardon.

It took two years of working with his doctor until he finally found the right medication. He's been seizure-free for the past few years.

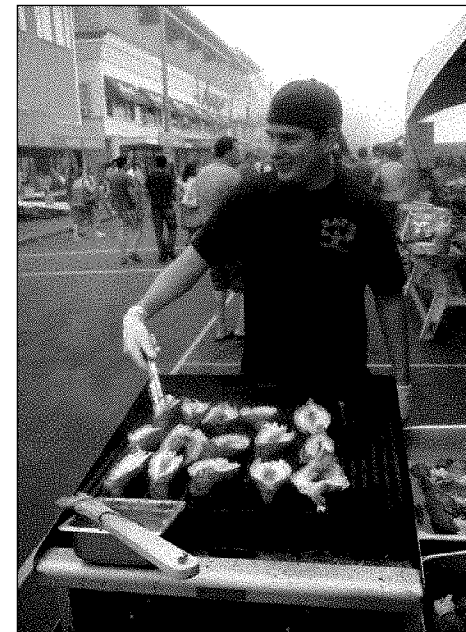
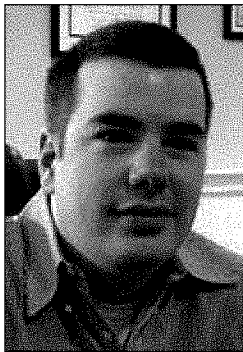
By 2013, his online apartment mapping business wasn't generating the same reliable income it once had. And, he found out his wife was expecting.

"Everything I'd experienced so far had prepared me for this moment, and I felt ready to take the bar exam, so I did," Reardon said.

His first case was a divorce case through the NH Bar's Pro Bono program, which set into motion his interest in family law and the formation of a practice that specializes in collaborative law.

He says it's the perfect application for his "engineer's brain," by helping couples arrive at the most equitable and efficient solution. Seeing couples get through the legal wrangling of divorce while maintaining a working relationship with one another is good for them and, particularly, for children involved.

Reardon lives in Rye where he and his wife are raising their 18-month-old son Robbie, with an assist from their three dogs, Daisy, Jack and Jerry. He continues to do some technology and website consulting on the side. As a lifelong tinkerer and child of the Internet age, it's simply inescapable.



But he admits that being an attorney is harder than being a CEO. It's also the most rewarding of the jobs he's had in his life.

"I like that it challenges me in different ways than being an engineer," he says. "You have to be good at many things at once, from dealing with people and writing well, to solving problems. It's hard because you take those problems home with you sometimes. But it's a good feeling when you have the skills to help a client sort things out in a way that's most beneficial to all involved."

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