

Planning pays off for Charlotte legal duo

Startup law practice was set in motion on campus

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Mark Jetton and **Eric Meredith** were two men on a mission.

Halfway through their second year of law school at Elon University, they decided they would start their own law firm in Charlotte. Jetton's family had lived in the area for 100 years. And Meredith, a High Point native, wanted to work here.

During their last months of school, they came to Charlotte every weekend to make contacts with other attorneys and pick their brains about running a firm. They even had a deal to sublease office space from law firm Gerdes, Mason and Simpson, which has since acted as a mentor and source of referrals.

With so much in place by the time they graduated two years ago, they spent the summer studying for the bar exam. After they were notified both had passed, they opened for business a few days later as Jetton & Meredith in September 2009.

"All that planning helped a lot," says Meredith, 28. "Thanks to our network of attorneys, we had clients when we hit the ground running."

Adds Jetton, also 28: "You have to create your breaks and put yourself into situations where you get them."

Their planning and execution were so well done, their practice has now grown to include two support employees and an associate attorney. Meredith specializes in family law, while Jetton concentrates on criminal defense and personal-injury cases.



PHOTO NANCY PIERCE
Meredith (left) and Jetton

“I had experience in family law working for a firm in Greensboro, while Mark had the connections in Charlotte,” Meredith says. “But it’s one thing to get business — you also have to do a good job.”

Notes Jetton: “You have to make clients feel that their case is important to you, that you have nothing to do but worry about their case.”

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DID YOU KNOW?

•**Jetton and Meredith** acknowledge it was brash for them to have everything in place to open a law firm before either had passed the bar exam. But they say they had complete confidence in each other’s capabilities. Plus, they figured, if one passed and the other didn’t, he could work as a paralegal.