



GIVE AND TAKE: Joe and Pam Moshé own Charles Rutenberg Realty in Plainview. "We meet somewhere in the middle, she says, "That's our M.O."

PARTNERS *in love* & BUSINESS

Many people, no matter how much they may love their spouse or partner, couldn't imagine spending the workday together.

Long Island couples who work together say they do it for reasons economic and emotional. Some join forces out of a desire for career change, entrepreneurial success and family togetherness.

Francine Fabricant, a career counselor based in Roslyn Heights and Manhattan, said that couples who work together successfully also can draw strength from their partner.

"If you have that support at work and home, you're really at an advantage," she said.

Set against those benefits are the conflicts that crop up in business and family life when couples work together.

Melody Bacon, director of the Irvine, California, branch campus of The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, has counseled couples who hit snags as they tried to combine their personal and business lives.

A prime problem, Bacon said, is that couples fail to define their roles in the workplace and at home.

"People have difficulties separating out the spheres they operate in," she said.

Compounding what she calls "role diffusion" is sensitivity sur-

rounding money.

"If you want to touch a tinderbox of feelings — you have financial issues," Bacon said.

Finances on the line

Further aggravating these issues is that the progression from couple to business partners often evolves with little consideration.

"These things grow organically without any forethought," Bacon said.

One husband was surprised to discover that his wife had signed

a \$100,000 lease for her retail shop that put them both "on the hook." They came to Bacon for marriage counseling, but ultimately both the union and the business unraveled.

"Couples do this kind of thing frequently," Bacon said. "You're not flying solo when you've got your whole family income in that business."

Family finances were on the line when Vincent and Susan Cutrone bought the East End Bagel Cafe in Southold. Susan had her doubts but put them aside and

fought to ensure success.

"Everything we had we put into that store. We had to make it work," said Susan, 53, who recalled registering shock when Vincent, 58, owner of an auto repair shop in Huntington, began negotiating to buy the bagel business in 1997.

"All he knew about food was what he put in his stomach," she said. "I thought he was crazy."

Still, Susan acknowledged, the auto repair shop left little time to spend with sons Alex, then 4, and Matthew, then 1.

"I thought it was more family-oriented than auto repair," Vincent said.

Though the store is open every day except Christmas — and regulars objected when they first closed for that holiday — a 3 p.m. daily closing leaves time for family.

ON THE COVER

Vincent and Susan Cutrone at the East End Bagel Cafe in Southold, a family business.