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Member Spotlight



Melissa Hoff, Principal, MBH Strategies

June 2012

Melissa Hoff is a legal marketing consultant and founder of MBH Strategies in Kirkland, Washington. For more than a decade, she has been actively involved in the Legal Marketing Association. In addition to serving as co-editor of *Strategies*, the monthly journal distributed to all LMA members, Melissa was instrumental in forming the LMA Seattle chapter (which later became LMA Northwest). She served as the chapter's first president.

How did you get into the legal marketing industry?

Like many people, I fell into legal marketing. Nearly 14 years ago, I was living in Denver, and a woman in my book club (a lawyer), asked if anyone knew someone who would be interested in a marketing job at her law firm. One thing led to the next, and I got the job.

Tell us a little bit about the founding of the LMA Seattle chapter ten years ago. What was your involvement in that?

When I moved to Seattle from Denver, it was to accept a position at Cooley Godward. I was eager to meet other legal marketing industry members and to get involved. I met a few marketing people at various legal industry events, and my network expanded from there. When I learned there wasn't a local chapter, I used the Top 25 Law Firms list in the Puget Sound Business Journal to create a list of marketing directors. Over time, a group of us formed and we mobilized to start the Seattle chapter of LMA (now the Northwest chapter). It was a very collaborative effort and a lot of fun.

Tell us about your current position. How long have you been with your current company?

I have worked at a number of different firms, including small, boutique firms of 10 lawyers; regional firms; and, national firms. Having seen the legal marketing landscape from different vantage points, I had an interest in consulting. I was a consultant at the Zeughauser Group (a consultancy that specializes in law firm marketing and business management) for three years and really enjoyed the work and the learning that comes from seeing different firms at various stages in their marketing evolution. I also had the chance to learn more about law firm operations and how marketing fits into the larger picture at firms of different sizes and market positions. As much as I loved the work, most of my clients were outside of Seattle, so there was a lot of travel. With a young child, I found it hard to achieve the work-life balance I wanted, so I decided to begin my own consulting practice working with a Northwest-based clientele. That was three years ago. I still get the benefits of working with different firms, but without having to be on an airplane so much!

What is the biggest ongoing challenge that your clients face?

I'd say that the biggest challenge I see my clients facing is how to achieve marketplace recognition, especially as a smaller or regional firm. Closely tied with this is how firms choose to allocate their resources in marketing.

How do you deal with that effectively?

My approach to helping my clients with this is to remind them that visibility is really a boots-on-the-ground effort, particularly for smaller or mid-sized firms that can't always compete with the bigger firms when it comes to marketing budgets. Ultimately, lawyers are the sales arm of the marketing machine, so working closely with them is key to success. Many of my engagements involve working directly with individual lawyers or with practice/industry groups to identify strategies and marketing plans (at the group or individual level) that are action-based so that firms—and the lawyers—are receiving the highest return on their investment of marketing time and resources.

What is your favorite part of the job/working for your clients?

One-on-one work is my favorite part of the job whether I'm an in-house marketer or in a consulting capacity. Legal marketing is a high-touch business and I really enjoy working with people to identify impediments and figure out how to get around them so that their marketing efforts are successful for them and ultimately, for the firm.

What is your favorite thing about living in the Northwest?

I've lived in the Northwest for about ten years and continue to discover new restaurants and new things to do. I love that we have access to water and mountains and I also love the spring time because we have so many beautiful flowers in bloom. We enjoy smaller-town Kirkland life with our ten-year-old daughter, with frequent walks to local parks and restaurants. We enjoy the natural beauty of the area with walks, hikes and biking. We also enjoy the Seattle Symphony, the Seattle Repertory Theater and of course, a good movie!

What is your favorite Pacific Northwest restaurant?

When it's just my husband and me, we enjoy dinner at places like Lola's and Black Bottle in downtown Seattle. Most of the time, though, we eat out as a family. We like the local pizza place or go out for Mexican food at Cactus in downtown Kirkland. We also love Din Tai Fung in Bellevue.

What do you do in your free time?

Our family does a lot of traveling. My husband and I went to Prague in February while our daughter went to Colorado on her first solo-trip to visit her grandparents. This summer, we're taking a family trip to Tanzania for a safari. We are always excited to plan our next trip and to learn about different cultures and the history of the places we visit.