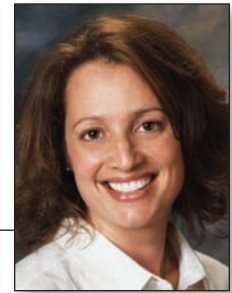


MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

Mining for Knowledge



By Steve Conley & Melissa Hoff

He Said

I did not make plans to attend LMA's 2011 Annual Conference. So, I decided to dig out, dust off and review nuggets from conferences past. Consider this the panning-for-gold edition.

Nugget one: *Make sure your notes are legible; you may need them later.*

I'm fairly certain that Mrs. Steiner, my first-grade teacher, or a savvy University of Colorado journalism professor mentioned this: When taking notes, ensure that future generations—and you, even sooner—can read them. Though I've often recapped classes, meetings or freelance assignments by reviewing notes and quotes, I missed that step at one LMA conference—or the next line would have been typed sooner.

Nugget two: *Dump the “garbage” from your writing. Replace vague words with solid, specific words.*

Clyde Leland of Leland Communications suggested taking out the written garbage at an LMA conference session in Toronto in 2001. After rereading notes from that discussion, I rewrote a sentence. Then I eliminated the sentence. Multiple entries became “can read them.” Simpler. Stronger.

Nugget three: *Emphasize “table stakes” expertise.*

Last year in Denver, Andrew Zolli of Z+ Partners called for firms to reaffirm core, “table stakes” expertise when seeking to grow niche practices. Facets of this gem might also apply to client relationships, event management and media relations.

Nugget four: *Vendors are people, too.*

From Orlando exhibit halls to Ohio hallways, vendors and legal consultants often freely and openly report trends, statistics or best practices. So if you didn't make Florida, mine the minds and websites of those who did.

Ask vendors and others to share their impressions. You may find the insights useful for connecting projects, pipelines and people.

Nugget five: *Keep your eye on new “tech” options.*

The 1998 Los Angeles, nee Hollywood, event ended with a sleepy Saturday session featuring audience-polling technology. I don't know of a firm that implemented it, but recently we've seen firms poll clients in person and online; we've seen iPhones and iPads arrive; and we've seen video go vogue.

Surely, there's more to come in the next 25 years. Dig it?

Steve Conley can be reached via SDConley@Gmail.com or 303/877-8577.

She Said

It's hard to believe that we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Legal Marketing Association. Much has changed since I joined the field almost 15 years ago. Time for a personal retrospective.

I didn't grow up wanting to be a legal marketer (did any of us?). I didn't even know it existed as a field until I stumbled on my first law firm job—a position at a firm that specialized in construction defect law—which was brought to my attention by a member of my book club.

Right after starting, I was at an aerobics class and was chatting with someone about my new position. Turns out, her husband was a property manager for a large condominium complex with massive construction defects. One thing led to the next and my firm got the multi-million-dollar case. They were thrilled and thought I walked on water. This small firm had me out-and-about, joining industry groups, volunteering on committees, and interfacing with clients and referrals. I was too green to know that most legal marketers weren't as visible externally. Nor did it ever occur to me to call this type of activity by its name: business development.

After leaving the construction defect firm, I had more traditional marketing jobs, with more traditional titles. My duties were more back end, but I learned the nuts-and bolts: strategic planning, target marketing, the elements of great client service, the workings of law firms—and I joined LMA.

Looking back, I realize that my first firm was actually ahead of its time. I'm still a bit surprised by how slow law firms have been to embrace business development and how reluctantly they utilize their marketing professionals in client-related contact. But it's happening, one step at a time.

Our field has matured in many important ways. Marketing is no longer a dirty word. Chief marketing officers have emerged and command the respect (and the salary) of other top executives. The majority of lawyers—and law firms—accept our work as important to the success of the business. Overall, I see more lawyers participate more willingly than I did 10 years ago and marketers are working closely with lawyers to understand their practice, their clients and their business flow.

Indeed, the trend lines are positive. So here's to 25 years, and 25 more! ■

Melissa Hoff, 425/822-5262, melissa@mbhstrategies.com