

Musings on Three Very Meaningful Words, Part 2



By Jeff Scalzi & Melissa Hoff

He Said

It's amazing how quickly life can change. In the January issue of *Strategies*, "Recover" was our charge. Not from too many cocktails on New Year's Eve (well, perhaps that, too), but from the most tumultuous year the legal industry had ever experienced. Alas, now it's over. Our revenue numbers are in and *The American Lawyer* is already calling for comment. Our budgets and plans are in place. New LMA chapter officers have assumed office. Heck, even "We Are the World" has been re-recorded 25 years later in support of the terrible devastation in Haiti. It felt like just yesterday I was blasting the original version on my boom box as a young teenager. Now my seven year old listens to this new version on his iPod. OMG, how things have changed.

There is no room for complacency in today's world. This year affords us the opportunity to start fresh and do what we really need to do: Refocus. And let's start with what we know is most important to the viability of our firms: sales. But whether we call it "business development," "client relations" or "revenue generation," what we're really talking about is sales. Sales are the most critical focus of any business, so why should they not be for a law firm? Like any corporation, law firms must focus on laying the groundwork to support sales efforts today and into the future. Identifying and articulating the challenges that confront the business are often the most difficult parts for a business owner, and again, law firms are no exception.

Legal marketers must lead their firms in recognizing the unique challenges they face as an organization. Whether your organization has one marketing and business development professional or 101, an integrated approach is critical for success. Extending that model into business planning is also critical. Lawyers, legal marketing and business development professionals should all be immersed in the firm's practices and industry teams and armed with knowledge that will allow them to be both strategic and proactive. We must drive the direction of marketing and sales activities and align client service initiatives according to firm strategy.

As we prepare to come together as an industry in Denver, we leave the proverbial rubble of 2009 behind and refocus on the opportunities that are well within our reach. Just as iPods have replaced boom boxes and Justin Bieber has replaced Lionel Richie in the opening verse of "We are the World 25 for Haiti," truly a new day has dawned. Let's embrace it.

Jeff Scalzi, 617/832-7004, jscalzi@foleyhoag.com

She Said

As we prepare for LMA's Annual Conference, I'm reminded how I feel each year when I attend. I return to my work with increased energy, fresh ideas and renewed focused on what I want to accomplish. The sessions are informative, the speakers and presenters are industry experts and leaders—but what really inspires me and keeps me coming back year after year are the attendees. I'm drawn in by the chance to connect with old friends, meet the industry newcomers and exchange ideas with my peers.

The business landscape is dynamic and always in flux. We never have the luxury of resting on our laurels or becoming complacent with solutions that have always worked. To keep pace with the industry changes over the past year, we need to be prepared to challenge our assumptions. Perhaps that's why this year's conference themes of "Recover...Refocus...Reunite" resonate so strongly. If there was ever a need to see our business in a new light, it's now.

Focus is elusive. Just when you think you see something clearly or understand all the nuances of a problem, a new layer or complexity emerges and you realize you need to adjust your way of thinking; to refocus. It's like looking through a kaleidoscope—as you rotate and point the chamber toward light, you notice patterns you didn't see before. Your eyes constantly adjust to take in the new view.

We all hit times in our professional lives when we need to refocus. Whether we are transitioning to a new role, a new job or are assisting our firms through a transition, sometimes we need to step back and view the situation from a distance. Seeing things through a different lens or through the prism of another's point of view allows us to be more objective and thoughtful—and to make decisions with a clear head. Every time I'm in the company of my LMA colleagues, I get that fresh perspective. A new take on an old problem. A fresh twist on a stale idea. A different slant on a long-held bias. I return home with new ideas—and a new attitude.

The chaotic economy has had an impact on all of us. But coming together as an industry serves as a reminder that we're not in it alone. The dialogue that takes place at the LMA Annual Conference is a launchpad for exploring solutions that we may have overlooked previously. It's an opportunity to focus our attention on what might have missed.

See you in March!

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