

# MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

## Onward and Upward



By Steve Conley & Melissa Hoff

### He Said

Perception, like a good sports car, often turns on a dime. It's both a tool and an outcome at once — a marketing device to be employed responsively, not reactively. Premised on nuance, not force; subtlety, not strain.

Recently, I found myself intrigued after I first reacted negatively and then responded positively to a marketing horror story. No, make that horror-story marketing. Have you seen the commercial in which a young child suggests that everyone in the “Dream House” dies? Reasonably creepy, right? Effective, too, I think. I saw that movie trailer along with the beginning of a similar promo for a different flick. Slightly distracted, I didn't catch the whole trailer. Still, as it screened, I thought, “Must be a blood and gore cycle for Hollywood.”

That instinct seemed correct, because television of late also has its share of scary-genre programming, including “American Horror Story,” “Grimm” and others.

In fact, it was these “chase factors” that reminded me of similarities to law firm marketing. It's a realm where one firm may make a strategic branding move or otherwise generate buzz, prompting a bit of envy — and thus a chase — among competitors.

“Me too” too often drains valuable marketing dollars from more productive or ROI-sensitive strategies. Ads, media efforts or events by the follow-on crowd sometimes come up a little short. Rather than helping firms distinguish or redefine themselves, chase tactics simply reinforce another's first-to-market message.

Better to innovate than imitate, usually.

Still, like a sports car winding downhill, my perception downshifted immediately as I glimpsed something unexpected in my movie-trailer lane. Simply and prominently displayed was the logo of a brand known for creativity, passion and fun — not blood, guts or gore. Instantly, Disney's copycat trailer for “The Odd Life of Timothy Green,” returned a very perceptive outcome: 30 seconds worth of branding gold.

Here's to a 2012 filled with pictures of success and moments worth their wait as well as their weight. ■

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Steve Conley, 303/877-8577, [SDConley@gmail.com](mailto:SDConley@gmail.com).

### She Said

It's hard to believe that I'm at the end of my two-year tenure as co-editor of *Strategies*. I'm lucky to have had the chance to work with many talented people along the way, and to participate in LMA at the national level. I'm thankful for the chance to give back to an organization that has been instrumental to my career development and skill building.

I've always loved the holidays. I enjoy the decorations, the carols, my annual tradition of taking my daughter to see the Nutcracker ballet and the time with family and friends. It also feels to me like a new beginning. The start of a new year brings opportunities; some we can plan for, some we don't yet know about. It's a time of hope and reflection.

As 2012 approaches, I'm thinking less about my work-related goals and more about the mindset I bring to the job. What I'm thinking about is how I can challenge myself in the coming year to bring a more focused, deliberate mind to what I'm doing, why I'm doing it and how (or if) it impacts the longer-term big picture. It's so easy to jump from task to task without really asking if it helped advance the greater goal.

All jobs, but I think law firms in particular, develop in us an ability to meet the competing needs of demanding people day in and day out. It's easy in this environment to feel pressured to do what people ask because you might only have a handful of interactions with any given lawyer over the course of a year. It takes more time — and courage — to slow down and really assess if what we're doing has impact, or if we're just checking things off the list.

When we bring a fresh outlook, an engaged mind and a willingness to learn and grow, our lives (and our jobs) are not only more interesting, but also more fulfilling. Maybe it's age, maybe it's maturity — I hope it's wisdom. But, in 2012, I'm slowing down, and I'll be more productive than ever as a result.

Thanks for a great two years! Steve Conley, my steadfast friend and long-ago colleague, will keep on keepin' on as co-editor of *Strategies*. He will be joined by Dave Poston, an outstanding addition to the *Strategies* team. Welcome aboard, Dave. Steve, it's been a pleasure to work with you again! ■

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Melissa Hoff, 425/522-3010, [melissa@mbhstrategies.com](mailto:melissa@mbhstrategies.com)