# The Legal Link

Winter 2015

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# The Legal Link

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

- Promote and enhance the competence and professionalism of all members of the legal management team;
- Improve the quality of management in law firms and other legal service organizations; and
- Represent professional legal management and managers to the legal community and to the community at large.



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## **President's Message**

The recent Martin Luther King holiday reminds us of the importance of diversity in our organizations and our firms. In recognition of this, we have invited Andrea Zekis, a consultant for Arkansas Human Rights Campaign and co-founder and Executive Director of the Arkansas Transgender Equality Coalition, to discuss various aspects of diversity at our meeting on February 11, 2015. We hope that you will be able to join us to hear Ms. Johnson speak about her experiences and what she hopes to achieve in her current role.

The Martin Luther King celebrations are also significant because many groups honor Martin Luther King by organizing events which encourage all of us to do something to give back to our community. As ALA members, we are also encouraged to get involved and give back to our local, regional, and national organizations and our communities. Several of you will be approached in the next couple of weeks and months and asked if you would be willing to serve as an officer of our local chapter or a chair person of one of our committees. I would like to encourage each of you to consider saying "yes," when you are approached about serving. While sometimes we have a tendency to be intimidated and think we cannot serve because we do not have the necessary skills or experience, that is rarely true. As administrators, we are leaders at our firms. We would not have been chosen to fill those positions, if we did not have leadership characteristics and skills which would be beneficial in a leadership role in ALA or any other organization. The key to gaining the confidence to serve is to start out on committees or in the easier officer positions which do not require a significant amount of time. It is important, too, to determine your strengths and to seek positions initially which match your strengths. As you take these baby steps in leadership roles, you will gain confidence and realize that you, too, can serve and can be an excellent leader even in the more challenging positions.

My year of service as our chapter president is quickly coming to an end. It

has been a good journey for me. I have gained confidence and developed skills which also help me be a better administrator at my firm. As I said earlier, I would like to encourage each of you to step up and say "yes" when opportunities present themselves. It will be a good experience for you too!

I look forward to Vivian's service in 2015 and the service of many of our other talented members. As our past leaders have set high standards and developed road maps to make leadership easier, so, too, will these future leaders. I can't wait to see the new levels of excellence our Arkansas Chapter will achieve under their leadership.



Arkansas Chapter President Diane Smith



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# **Member Spotlight: Debbie Guss**

Tell us about your background, where you grew up and then transition into your career. I was born and raised in Sherwood, Arkansas. I have two older brothers, both of whom had left home by the time I started elementary school. I was basically raised as an only child. I married young to a wonderful young man in the Air Force, much to my father's dismay. For the next 20 years we moved all over the U.S. and spent some time in England. Being the wife of a military man, every time we were transferred, I started a new career.

Tell us about your family. At the present time, I live with two miniature schnauzers, Maddie and Jaxie. They both came from shelters.

How did you begin your career in the legal field? Purely by accident. In January 1986, we moved from Alaska to Shreveport, Louisiana. I had been working my entire adult life and decided that I was going to take off until the fall when school started again and spend time with my family. I didn't take me long to get bored so I decided to do a little temp work to help with the boredom. The agency asked me if I would be willing to work for a solo attorney for a week until his new secretary could start. I informed them that I had no legal experience and they assured me that would be okay. On Monday, I arrived to find a word processing program I had never seen in my life. The attorney was very patient and allowed me spend the morning doing the tutorials so I could get his letters out that day. By Wednesday, the attorney asked me if I would be interested in working for another attorney. One of his friends was looking for a legal assistant. Again, I told him I didn't have any legal experience and he assured me that would not be a problem. I interviewed with his friend and he offered me the job. Unfortunately, the attorney was a chain smoker so I turned down the offer. At the end of my week, I returned home and waited to see what other temp positions I might be offered. Approximately two weeks later, the original attorney called me and asked me if I would like to come work for him. From then on, I have been working for attorneys.

What are your main responsibilities? I am the officer manager/paralegal for the firm. There are two attorneys, one bookkeeper/assistant and me.

How would your attorneys and staff describe you? In a word "dedicated."

What is the best professional advice you ever received? Before I started my very first job as an invoice clerk when I first got out of school, my dad told me to always give them my best and earn my pay.

What is the most interesting job you ever had? The most interesting and rewarding job I had was being a mother. It is also one of the hardest jobs I ever had.

What are your outside activities? I along with my friends, Stan and Linda Valley, are members of the Supper Club at the Ronald McDonald House. On the second Sunday of each month, we go to the house and prepare a meal for 50. It is such a blessing to be able to give those folks a home-cooked meal when they are so totally concentrating on the health of their child at Children's Hospital. We celebrate with them when their child is able to swallow or any other small accomplishment that means they are one day closer to bringing that child home. I can't think of anything I would rather do on a Sunday afternoon.



# **Member Spotlight (Cont.)**

What do you enjoy most about your affiliation with ALA? I really enjoy the friendships and the fellowship with everyone. I was nervous about joining because our firm is so small, but Vivian encouraged me to give it a try. From that first meeting, everyone was so welcoming and made me feel so comfortable. I am very proud to be a part of such a wonderful organization.

How has ALA benefitted you? Being able to network with all the other members and share information has made my life so much easier.

Outside of my family, my most treasured belonging is... My friends. The last ten years have been very difficult for me and I don't think I would have made it without them.

My favorite movies are... Whatever I am seeing at the time. Vivian Koettel and I are movie buffs. We try to take in a movie at least 3 or 4 times a month.

My friends describe me as... caring, generous, and dedicated.

My favorite quote is... Don't sweat the small stuff.

What is your favorite word? love

What is a word you dislike? hate

A sound or noise I love is... Laughter



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5 Secrets of Highly Successful Law Firm Retirement Plans



**CHARLES BERNIER** Principal Professional Liability Consultant and In-house Counsel at ECBM Insurance Brokers and Consultants

Cyber Security: Protecting Your Law Firm



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Proven Strategies to Attract Top Talent That Will Fit In, Perform & Stick

*Insight into Profitability, Strategies and Innovations.* Additional podcasts at Legal Management Talk.



# Go Green: Truths & Myths

"It's not easy being green." - Kermit the Frog

By: Judy Anderson

*"Green is the prime color of the world, and that from which its loveliness arises."* - Pedro Calderon de la Barca, dramatist and poet, the greatest Spanish playwright of the Golden Age, 1600-1681

Any way you look at it, it's probably safe to say that green is all around us. On a recent drive in and around northeast Oklahoma, I was struck by the beauty of the multiple shades of green along the countryside and the lushness of the growth all around. It did turn my thoughts to all the talk about "green."

The word "green" continues to represent the need for, and efforts toward, sustainability of people and all living things.

John S. Kirk, CLM, from Philadelphia, PA's, Manko Gold & Katcher, has done a number of presentations to ALA groups over the past few years. John paraphrased the United Nation's Brundtland Commission (1987) definition, "sustainability entails meeting the 'Triple Bottom Line' of economic, social and environmental responsibility. It is about fostering respect for people and other living things while at the same time wisely using and managing environmental and economic resources." John also repeats what ALA Tulsa heard at a Chapter meeting several months ago from Michael Patton: "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle." John cites the following examples of Truths and Myths regarding sustainability:

**Truth:** Utensils made from corn plastic will melt if used for eating hot soup (but they are fine for gazpacho!).

**Myth:** Recycled paper works poorly in copiers and printers. (Typically, the problem is with the manufacturer's wrap; dust accumulates in the package. Unwrap and fan the paper ream several times to eliminate the dust.)

**Truth:** Running a full dishwasher is more efficient than using paper plates.



**Myth:** When the TV or an appliance is off, it's off. (Be aware of phantom power use; use power strips and turn off the strip rather than just the appliance.)

**Myth:** Leaving on lights, computers and other appliances uses less energy than turning them off and makes them last longer.

**Truth:** Most screen savers do not save energy unless they actually turn off the screen or, in the case of laptops, turn off the backlight.







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  - o Learn and share knowledge at BOLD (Business of Law Discussion) Bites
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## GETTING APPROVAL TO ATTEND ALA'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE

You probably know the benefits of attending ALA's Annual Educational Conferences and Expositions, and the positive impact it can have on your job performance and the success of your law firm or legal department. But how do you persuade a managing partner who may not be completely aware of your needs and how ALA can meet them?

Managing partners are more apt to approve attendance at conferences and seminars if they understand how the firm will benefit and what it will cost. Here are a few suggestions for obtaining approval:

• Review the Conference materials. Focus on the course of study and sessions that will address your firm's problems or plans.

• Prepare an estimate of the costs. Include the registration fees, airfare, hotel, meals and miscellaneous expenses. (Remember, register early and save money!)

• Identify a back-up person or procedure to ensure coverage. Develop a strategy to handle important business while you are away.

• Seek approval immediately! An early request shows that you are a careful planner. Plus, you may get reduced registration fees and airfares.

• Put your request in writing. Include benefits to the firm, the information you expect to gain, and how it relates to the firm's plans.

• Ask the partners what they think you might benefit from at the Conference. Be sure to get their input and a sense of their priorities before attending.

• Follow up in a reasonable time. A gentle reminder or an offer to discuss the Conference may lead to approval.

• After Conference, bring back vendor brochures and information. Share the information with the partners or your co-workers as appropriate. Also, make sure to share at least one thing you learned, not only with partners, but the entire staff.



# 2015 IDEA AWARDS: SHOWCASING INNOVATION

ALA takes great pride in announcing its call for 2015 IDEA Award submissions. 2014 was a big success with many entries modeling Innovation, Development, Engagement and Advancement in the legal community. The awards will be presented at ALA's 2015 Annual Conference & Expo in Nashville, May 17-20.

## Calling all innovators - submissions now OPEN!

### Who's eligible?

ALA chapters, committees, regions, members, law firms and ALA Business Partners are all eligible. And because innovation knows no boundaries, there are no pre-determined categories.

#### What's innovative?

Gain inspiration on how innovation can be brought to life from the 2014 IDEA Award recipients.

### Submit your achievement!

Learn more about the IDEA Award and submission guidelines.

**DEADLINE TO SUBMIT – JANUARY 12, 2015 Questions?** Contact awards@alanet.org <sup>66</sup> The IDEA Awards celebrate the innovative side of our members, chapters and business partners.<sup>99</sup>

AWARDS

JANINE BOOK 2014 Award Winner Former Region 1 Director Winter 2015 Edition

# **Business Meeting Topics**

<u>January</u>

Tom Peeke—Voice Technology Up-

date

**February** 

Andrea Zekis—Diversity in the

Workplace

March

**Roundtable Discussion** 

<u>April</u>

Chris Heil, Attorney—HR Update



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# ATTENTION

Do you have something to say? Voice your opinions! Record your thoughts and weigh in on the issues that matter to you.

What's in it for you? Legal administrators gain credit which could allow them an opportunity to win a full scholarship to an annual or regional conference. Business partners get more exposure before the legal community. Email articles to <u>mtyree@bradhendricks.com</u>.



# January 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7 Board Meeting	8	9	10
11	12 Deadline for IDEA Awards	13	14 Business Meeting	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



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# February 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 Business Meeting	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23 Managing Partner Forum— Orlando, FL	24 Bonnie's Birthday Managing Partner Forum— Orlando, FL	25	26	27	28

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# March 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 Business Meeting	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
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29	30	31				



# *April 2015*

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 New ALA Officers take office	2	3	4
5	6	7	8 Business Meeting	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		



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#### 2015 **MARK YOUR CALENDARS** Plan your education and networking. JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY THE WED THU FR SAI THE WED THU FRI SAT SUN WON THE WED THU FRU SAT SUM MOR THE WED THU FRU SAT SAN WAN THE WED THU FRI SAT SEN MON THE WED THU FRI SAT 1234567 10 10 11 10 11 3456 ... 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

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# **PLAN YOUR EDUCATION FOR 2015**

15 16 17 18 19 20

- > NEW! Managing Partner/Executive Director Forum, February 23-24, Orlando, FL
- > NEW! Finance Conference for the Legal C-Suite, May 17, Nashville, TN
- > 2015 Annual Conference & Exposition, May 17-20, Nashville, TN
- > Chapter Leadership Institute, July 23-25, Grand Rapids, MI
- > Large Firm Principal Administrators Retreat, August 6-8, Colorado Springs, CO
- > Business of Law Conference Central, September 10-12, New Orleans, LA
- > Essential Competencies for Legal Adminsrators, September 16-18, Chicago, IL
- > Business of Law Conference East, October 1-3, Atlanta, GA
- > IP Conference for Legal Professionals, October 8-9, Washington, DC area
- > Business of Law Conference West, October 22-24, Las Vegas, NV
- > Corporate Law Department Symposium, TBD

### alanet.org/events

14 15 16



Strategic Planning: A Critical Process for Firms of All Sizes

## Strategic Planning: A Critical Process for Firms of All Sizes

By: Brenda L. Stewart, Stewart Marketing and Consulting LLC

Over the past few months, I have been surprised by the number of times I have been asked certain questions by attorneys in small or solo firms.

"Should a small firm like ours have a strategic plan?"

"Is it too late in the year to develop a strategic plan?"

For me, this could indicate a lack of understanding regarding the strategic planning process and the benefits that can be achieved from developing a strategic plan, regardless of firm size or time of year. A firm's strategic plan should be evolving, reviewed frequently, and revised to reflect changes in the firm and economic conditions.

In its simplest form, strategic planning is the process by which a law firm determines (or affirms) the overall direction of the firm (mission), what needs to happen to achieve a desired direction, and how to execute or implement specific tasks designed to lead the firm toward the primary vision or goal. The strategic planning process does not have to be complicated; in fact, the more complicated you make the process, the less likely you are to complete it and be successful with follow-through and implementation. The process, when executed properly, should unite your firm and provide focus and direction for the future.

## Who should participate in the strategic planning process?

All partners in a firm should be involved in the strategic planning process. In larger firms, participation may include completion of assessment surveys or questionnaires. In smaller firms, partners may attend meetings to work through the process and provide input. Whenever possible, associate attorneys should be included as well. Their insight into issues, both external and internal, can sometimes be very enlightening. Not to be overlooked is the involvement of non-lawyer administrative staff. The office manager, legal administrator or executive director of the firm (titles vary from one firm to another, based on size and other factors) should have direct involvement and participation in the entire process. In many small firms, the administrative manager, along with the managing partner, are responsible for implementation of specific action items generated from the planning process. Their involvement in development of the plan will give them a better understanding of the goals, and increase their ability to facilitate the action items established.

## What format should the strategic planning process take?

To ensure that the strategic planning process is a positive experience and one that will result in an executable plan, I recommend that firms consider using the SWOT analysis model. Using this model,

Continued on next page...

participants in the process review and analyze the firm's strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O) and threats (T). For the process to be successful, attorneys need to put aside personal goals or issues, and consider the needs and goals of the firm as a whole.

During the planning process, there are some key questions to ask; their answers form the basis for development of the firm's strategic plan. Some key questions include:

- What is the firm's mission?
- Is there internal buy-in for this mission?
- What is the firm known for in the business community?
- Does the firm's external reputation align with the firm's mission? If not, how can we correct it?
- Why do clients work with our firm?
- What are the attorneys doing (individually or within practice groups) to advance the mission of the firm?
- Of the practice areas we currently have, are there any that should be eliminated? Are there any that should be of increased focus, given the client base and escalated demand for specific services?
- Do we want to grow in size or add new practice areas?
- Does our firm have established business development goals or objectives?
- How much time and resources (personnel and financial) does the firm spend on marketing, advertising and business development?
- How could marketing and business development funds be better allocated to achieve the stated goals of the firm?
- Who are our biggest competitors for legal work?
- How do we stack up against the competition based on quality of work and reputation?
- What is our target revenue for the firm and per partner for the current and coming year?
- Are we using technology to maximize efficiency in all areas of the firm?

All the questions above are designed to help the firm work through the SWOT analysis and start to

identify a path for development of a strategic plan. Below is an example of a SWOT analysis for "Law Firm ABC."

Strengths:	Weaknesses:
Highly specialized attorneys	Firm has only one big rainmaker
• Reputation in specific industry as the "go to firm"	<ul> <li>Attorney retention with regard to diversity</li> </ul>
• Excellent use of paralegals and other staff (leveraging)	Fee structure
Opportunities:	Threats:
Increased demand for specific services     based on changes in state laws	Expansion of other firms into local market
Potential client base growing with new companies moving into local market	<ul> <li>Client demands for pricing discounts</li> <li>Expectations of clients regarding diversity staffing of their matters</li> </ul>

## How do you get the strategic planning process started?

Once the decision is made to embark on the journey of strategic planning (and it truly is a journey), a simple questionnaire should be created and distributed to all attorneys. Questions like those listed earlier should be included, as well as others that are specific to already identified issues or concerns in the firm. The surveys should be completed and returned to a designated person, in many cases the executive director or administrative manager. Results of the survey should be summarized for review in the strategic planning session.

## How do you conduct a strategic planning session?

A strategic planning session should be scheduled well in advance, and attorneys should commit to attending and participating. The meeting does not have to be long and laborious; it can and should be a fast-paced fact-finding meeting in which attorneys work through the SWOT analysis (using the summarized survey information) to start to identify key issues and develop goals for the future. In firms that I work with to develop strategic plans, this part of the process can take from 2-4 hours. Much longer than that and you are guaranteed to have declining participation by attorneys, and probably even see some eyes rolling back in their heads!

The outcome of the strategic planning session should be a list of realistic and attainable goals. For each goal there should be a strategy for achieving the goal. Each strategy should then be broken down into multiple action items or specific steps to be completed. STOP! This is where many firms fall short and are unable to implement their strategic plan. Historically, large firms have spent substantial sums of money hiring consultants and significant numbers of non-billable hours developingplans that, ultimately, are not executed. Each strategy should be assigned to a key person in the firm who will be responsible for execution of the strategy, keeping in mind that everyone still has their normal responsibilities. Specific action items should also be assigned to individuals responsible for execution. This brings accountability into the process and greatly improves the likelihood that the process will continue to completion. Remember to not be too aggressive in

setting goals. Consider allocating the time and resources needed to achieve the top five goals. With support from management and careful selection of those responsible for implementation, your firm can work through the process successfully.

## Can you conduct a strategic planning session without hiring a consultant?

The answer to that question will vary from firm to firm, and will depend largely on the ability of a firm to work through the process carefully with an emphasis on implementation of action items developed. Involving appropriate administrative staff or managers will increase the chances for success, as they are often the ones assigned the critical responsibility to implement strategies developed. Many firms find it beneficial to use a consultant to facilitate the process. For some firms it's helpful to have the outside perspective of an experienced consultant, who can play a key role in helping the firm identify issues and develop goals. Consultants can be used to streamline and facilitate the process, but their involvement does not have to be excessive.

### What are some of the benefits of strategic planning?

There are many benefits to strategic planning in law firms;probably the most significant is development of a firm mission, vision and values that are supported and understood by all attorneys and staff. Other benefits include:

- Consistent messaging from partners and associates reinforces firm brand
- Agreement among attorneys regarding the firm's goals
- Increased focus and direction
- Refinement of marketing and business development initiatives
- Successful implementation of specific goals previously not accomplished
- Increased use of tools to monitor results and evaluate the same

Once your firm has completed the strategic planning process, you have really only just begun. This is not a one-shot deal – it's a process that must be worked and evaluated over time. As conditions in your firm and the marketplace change, the plan should be revisited and goals adjusted accordingly. The key to a successful strategic planning process is to keep it simple and start slow. Including as many people as necessary in development of the firm's vision and goals for the future helps ensure that the vision and goals are infused into the firm culture. There is much to be done, so resist the temptation to take on too much. Allow others in the firm (attorneys and staff) to participate in the completion of identified goals. This inclusion builds firm loyalty and allows the firm to benefit from the creativity and talents of everyone. Remember to celebrate your accomplishments internally, and objectively assess initiatives that are not working.

Yogi Berra said it best: "If you don't know where you are going, you will wind up somewhere else." The strategic planning process should be used by firms of all sizes to provide direction and to position the firm for success in the future!



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CONGRATULATIONS ANGELA FALCO ON YOUR PLATINUM PRESIDENT'S AWARD! We are so proud of you! "I have always tried to excel in everything I do, and from the minute I entered the profession years ago, I wanted to be the best administrator I could be. Despite no college degree, but with determined self-education and long, meticulous hard work, becoming a **Certified Legal Manager** demonstrated I have the knowledge to manage a law firm and help it grow. The CLM lends me and my firm credibility."

The ALA Certified Legal Manager (CLM)<sup>™</sup> program has been helping legal managers chart their courses to personal satisfaction and professional success for more than 15 years. Find out how CLM is right for you at www.alanet.org/clm.







#### Credibility. Leadership. Mastery. Martha J. Ackerman, CLM



## How ALA Benefitted My Business



ALA Member LoRraine Rowland with Jeff Straessle and Josh Earnhart from Business World

Business World, a local office technology company in Little Rock and business partner of ALA for many years, manages the document output strategy for many law firms in Arkansas. Business World has benefitted from our ALA partnership the most in the fact that ALA provides a forum in which we can share ideas across the entire legal industry in the state, with a focus on operational organization, internal efficiencies, and effective productivity. Business World, the fleet management expert in the AR legal industry, has showcased many products and solutions at the annual ALA Business Partner Forum,

including multifunctional copier equipment, interactive white boards and cost recovery software solutions for the legal industry. We, at Business World, highly value our partnership with ALA and look forward to many more successful years together.

Josh Earnhart, Business World



We have enjoyed a great relationship with the Arkansas Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators and look forward to continuing our relationship. Our goal is to help not simply provide a price for insurance but to work with our clients on identifying and addressing the various risks that face their business. Within a law firm, the role of risk management is often shared between partner attorneys and the Legal Administrators running many elements of the practice. By working with both attorneys and the administrator, we find that we are better able to properly identify all risks and provide tailored solutions to best protect the law firm.

The Association of Legal Administrators has provided us with a way to demonstrate our support for the essential work you perform and to gain a deeper understanding of the risks identified by legal administrators, which do not always overlap with the risks identified by partner attorneys.

Brendan Monaghan, J.D., Bancorp South

## How a Business Partner Benefitted My Firm

Having Consulting Ideas and Solutions as a Business Partner has made a world of difference in how I use Tabs. It is great to be able to share ideas not only with Cheryl, but with all the ALA members who use Tabs for timekeeping and accounting. She provides excellent service and is always quick to lend an ear.

> ALA Member Marie Ray Eichenbaum Liles P.A.

The Business Partner Forum always introduces me to a new vendor. Even if my needs are currently met, I have a great avenue to find a replacement if/when it becomes necessary. I now use two of our business partners who I didn't use previous to being a member of ALA.

> ALA Member Michelle Tyree The Brad Hendricks Law Firm

Maintaining a good relationship with Business Partners must be built on mutual respect and trust so that they will want to help grow our business. Make it a point to have open and honest communication and be sure your Business Partners understand your expectations. It's not always easy and sometimes you just have to move on. A strong vendor relationship can help us do our jobs more efficiently and effectively. And that makes a win-win for everyone!

> ALA Member Julia Strickland Cross, Gunter, Witherspoon, and Galchus, P.C.



# Discomfort: The Purveyor of All Productivity

**By: Paul Perdue** 

# **Discomfort: The Purveyor of All Productivity**

As I began my morning walk, I quickly discovered it was a bit colder outside than I had dressed for. I asked myself if I should go back inside and put on a warmer sweatshirt. I decided that it was just a little bit too cold, but it was not too cold for me to finish my walk.

The cold was uncomfortable. In fact, it was the perfect amount of uncomfortable for me to have a terribly productive morning walk. I found that I was walking at a brisker pace than I normally would if the temperature had been a little bit warmer. However, if it had been a little bit colder, I may not have finished the walk at all.

They say necessity is the mother of all invention, and that may be true. However, it is also true that discomfort is the purveyor of all productivity.

Discomfort can be that annoying clock on the wall that hums just a little too loudly. If it were to get any louder than it is now, it would cross some threshold which triggers a reaction from you -- a reaction to get that clock fixed (or smashed).

Discomfort shows up throughout our day in myriad ways. It may show up as the stack of papers that bother you because you simply cannot find the time to get through them all, as the emails that continue to come in faster than you can respond, as the report that always prints incorrectly, or as the inability to pull up a record the exact way you want to pull it up.

There are many different ways that discomfort shows up for each of us, and these discomforts, if dialed to the right temperature, can fuel our desire to improve. The oscillating change between desiring to be more comfortable and the desire to avoid discomfort operate in a similar fashion as the carrot and the stick. Sometimes we are driven to get the carrot, while other times we are driven to avoid the stick.

How does this observation help you? The observation gives you another view at how your machine works, and when you understand how your machine works you have the opportunity to make changes to its operations.

When this observation dawned on me during my early-morning chilly walk, I embraced my discomfort because I recognized its production value. I realized I was achieving a productive walk, burning calories, and getting more oxygen to pump through my lungs than I otherwise would have experi-

enced. I experienced the benefit of this production all day long with a roticeable increase in my energy and alertness.

Let me repeat that again for clarity: I embraced my discomfort because I recognized its production value.

This is the key. Acceptance. Acceptance of the discomfort. Acceptance of having things drive you nuts at work. Let them drive you nuts because *Continued on next page...* 



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# **Discomfort (cont.)**

that means you're being driven, and drive is what moves us from where we are to where we want to go.

Think of it as a dance you dance at work. Dancing is movement, and this movement is fueled by your discomfort. As soon as one item is handled, another will pop up. As things keep popping up, dance with them. You may even hum a little tune as you whiz around the dance floor at work fixing this and bettering that. Have fun with it because you're becoming the purveyor of all productivity.

Paul Purdue is a principal at <u>Attorney Computer Systems</u>. He's a self-proclaimed "infrastructure nerd." Check out Paul's growing library of legal technology articles and videos on Attorney Computer Systems' web site.

> Contact Paul: (800) 475-8104 <u>paul.purdue@attorneycomputersystems.com</u> <u>www.attorneycomputersystems.com</u>

## Are you looking to get involved? Do you know someone who is?

ALA has a few new opportunities for you to consider. We have been producing online educational courses for professional development based on market research from our members. We are currently looking for instructors in the following areas to help develop course materials and virtually teach the course online:

- Financial Management
- Operations Management
- Legal Industry/Business Management
- Communications Management

These are **paid positions**, and through training, weekly communication, and being present on the live teaching sessions, ALA's Learning Design Manager will be supporting each instructors every step of the way.

If you are interested in either of these opportunities, please feel free to contact Aaron Itczak at aitczak@alanet.org or 847-267-1535.



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