



The Houston CourtYard

A Source for Legal Management

Volume 5, Issue 4 December 2009



Houston Chapter
Association Of Legal Administrators

Message from the President ...

How Much Is The Puppy In the Window Please?

As you may recall, my last article touched on the importance of our Business Partners and the difference their contribution makes to our Chapter budget. This month, I want to take it a step further and outline the Chapter expenditures. Our income is generated by both membership dues and the Business Partnering Program. While the budget is available to all our members on our website, I think it can be difficult to understand exactly what is encompassed by some of the line items. I have provided a brief summary in this article.

Our biggest expense is, as it should be, education. Approximately 62% of our annual budget is spent on Chapter meetings, Section meetings, Scholarships to Chapter Leadership Institute, Regional and National Conferences. Our Chapter Business Expenses account for 11% of our budget, and the remaining 27% of our budget is spent on Committee expenses, such as Community Challenge, Business Partnering and our Annual Retreat. With these facts in mind, let me take a moment to point out that your Board is very cognizant of each dollar spent. We review the financials each month and work diligently to assure that all Chapter funds are spent in a manner consistent with our charter.

One expense on which we feel we can improve on is our Chapter luncheon costs. We all enjoy the Four Seasons and we are fortunate to have a budget which provides for such a luxury. However, over the years it has become commonplace for members to make a reservation for a luncheon and not attend. I know we are all busy, and situations do arise, both in our jobs as well as in our personal lives, that prevent us from attending although we had every intention on doing so. However, we are required to provide a head count so that an appropriate number of

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Houston Chapter Board of Directors and Committees

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Technology	Naomi Stair	nstair@js-llp.com
Business Partnering	Heather McConnell, CLM	hmcconnell@leggefarrow.com

www.alanet.org/jobbank

The Mission Statement

The Association of Legal Administrators' mission is to improve the quality of management in legal service organizations; promote and enhance the competence and professionalism of legal administrators and all members of the management team; and represent professional legal management and managers to the legal community and to the community at large.

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Feel free to contact our Editor at ccressy@publiclaw.com

Print and Assembly

Copy Source 1, LTD

The Houston CourtYard is published quarterly by the Houston Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators as a service to chapter members. The newsletter is circulated to almost 250 people including Houston Chapter members, business partners, national and regional officers and the presidents and newsletter editors of other chapters.

The Newsletter committee welcomes articles, letters, suggestions and comments. Request for permission to reprint any part of the publication should be addressed to the Editor.

The Houston Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators does not provide legal, financial or counseling advice through this publication, and any article, letter or advertisement published herein should not be considered an endorsement by them. The opinions expressed in the Houston CourtYard are strictly those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Association of Legal Administrators, and may have been edited.

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Message from the President

(Continued from page 1)

lunches can be ordered. We are then assessed a charge of \$36 per person, regardless of whether they attend. Perhaps if we consider that for every empty seat at the table, we could almost purchase one cap and gown for a student at Davis High School, it would change our view somewhat.

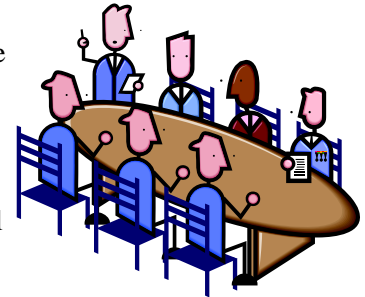
In summary, I am not suggesting that a reservation be made only if you are absolutely certain that you will be able to attend the meeting. Rather, I would simply like to encourage all of us to be mindful of this before making a reservation. Generally, we can add meals, but we are unable to downsize once our head count has been confirmed.

In these economic times, the financial future for all organizations is uncertain and, quite frankly, a little scary. As a Chapter leader, I feel it is my duty to be more diligent and thoughtful than ever about the Chapter expenditures. I ask the same of each of you. As always, the Board welcomes your input on these and any issues pertinent to our Chapter. We encourage your participation in any capacity you see fit. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as the President of this outstanding organization for the past nine months. I look forward to another wonderful three months of service. Happy New Year!

Robin Hoffman

The Houston Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators is soliciting Chapter members to serve on this year's Nominating Committee.

The Nominating Committee is responsible for selecting a slate of Chapter Officers to be presented to the general membership for election. Only three members will be selected to serve on the Committee.



Interested persons must be current members of both ALA and the Houston Chapter.

Please contact Kristie Ratliff, Past President, at kratliff@nathansommers.com if you are able to serve on this very important committee. Thank you.



The Year of Retirement

Earlier this year, we received word of Peggy McQuaid and Peggy Stillwell-Smith retiring from the legal field in order to pursue the finer things in life. Most recently, we learned of Linda Kearney's retiring at the end of 2009.

While we are happy for Peggy, Peggy and Linda, they will all be dearly missed.

With Linda's retirement, we do find ourselves in need of someone to take over her role as Chair of our IT/Operations Section. If you are interested in leading this exciting committee, please contact one of our Board members today. You will be glad you did.

Congratulations Ladies! Enjoy the good life—you certainly deserve it!

Regional Meeting Information

On Thursday, October 1, 2009 Herb Holloway attended the Regional Council meeting on behalf of the Houston Chapter. Items discussed included, but were not limited to:

- Region 4 San Antonio Conference overview
182 members attended and 54 exhibitors filled the exhibit hall
- Chapter Responsibilities and Role of Regional Management Team ("RMT")
- ALA Board Update
- Future Conferences
- Shared Chapter Successes


As always, the Regional Council invites input on ALA issues. They are also always looking for members who have served at the local level to serve at the Regional level. For more information, please feel free to contact one of the five Regional Team Members listed on the website.

New Members

Karen Guttormson
Administrator
Dewey & LeBoeuf, LLP

Welcome

Have you checked it out?

ALA Headquarters has developed a  Diversity Toolkit to be used as a guide to assist in implementing and maintaining diversity initiatives in legal organizations. ALA's Committee on Diversity recently revised the Toolkit which is now interactive and designed to allow users to more seamlessly select which resources best fit their organization.

For more information about the Diversity Toolkit, please visit

<http://www.alanet.org/diversity/diversitytoolkit.aspx>



While it won't strengthen your bones or provide you with a source of Vitamin D, earning your **Certified Legal Manager (CLM)**[®] designation has benefits of its own. Become a CLM and you will:

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* Not available in all states.



November/December
2009

Legal Management, the award-winning journal of the Association of Legal Administrators, features scholarly and "how-to" articles on issues of vital importance to law firm managers, legal administrators, and managing partners. With a circulation of more than 15,000 legal professionals, including approximately 10,000 ALA members and many of their managing partners, the journal has themed issues covering hot topics in all areas of law firm management, including:

- technological innovations,
- human resources trends,
- marketing
- financial planning,
- leadership issues, and
- general business practices.

The Association of Legal Administrators' goal is to:

- Develop and deliver programs and products that will provide high-quality, competency-based education to members of the legal management team.
- Improve and strengthen the flow of information to and from the members.
- Enhance the services and benefits available to members.
- Increase the visibility and credibility of the Association of Legal Administrators and its members in the legal community through effective marketing and communications, and through partnering efforts with the bar and other law-related associations.
- Retain and recruit members from all components of the legal management team.
- Maintain the Association's strong economic base.
- Increase diversity in the Association, in the legal management community and in all legal service organizations.
- Promote and continue an organizational structure which clearly and effectively allocates the policy and operational roles and responsibilities of volunteers and staff through Governance Policies that ensure that organizational resources are best-used to achieve the Association's Mission and Goals.



ALA's Legal Management Resource Center

Do you have a legal management problem, question or issue that you need to resolve? The Legal Management Resource Center (LMRC), created and hosted by the Association of Legal Administrators (ALA), is designed to immediately provide the information you need or to quickly direct you to other resources, most on the Internet, where the knowledge you seek can be found. If you need quick personal assistance, use the LMRC to contact ALA's Management SolutionsSM Reference Desk, where our expert group of researchers will help you find the answer to your legal management question.

Log onto ALAnet.org for more details.

Salary Survey

The 2009 Houston Salary Survey Is Still Available

If you are interested in purchasing the report, the cost is \$100 for Houston Chapter ALA members who participated in the salary survey and \$450 for Houston Chapter ALA members who did not participate. Please make your check payable to:

Houston Chapter – Association of Legal Administrators
Attention: Wendy Crane, Chapter Manager
7314 Crescent Bridge Court
Humble, TX 77396

My Managing Partner just walked into my office and needs:

Information on
"green" office
practices

Sample
telecommuting
policies

An attorney
withdrawal
checklist

Where do you begin?

At the Association of Legal Administrators (ALA) we understand that when you need information, you want it quickly and from a reliable source.



Put your ALA membership to work for you!

ALA Management SolutionsSM offers you access to a competent, experienced team of researchers -- and it's FREE to ALA members! Just tell us what you need; we'll respond quickly with the best information available.

Send your questions to infocentral@alanelt.org, or call 847.267.1385.

Your connection
to knowledge, resources and networking



GBB, Law Firm Going Green

Jill Randall, Contributing Editor, Green Business Bureau,
www.gbb.org

Most people probably don't think of "attorneys" when they consider who are today's environmental mavericks, but law firms would benefit greatly if they were. Going green is not only good for the environment – it's good for business. But how do you start?

While the nature of litigation requires a vast number of documents be written, printed and copied, that doesn't mean many of those documents can't be stored electronically instead. Many law firms are changing their policies about what paper should be stored digitally instead of printed, such as inter-office memos and other inconsequential documents. Posting policy manuals online instead of distributing them in thick binders to employees is a huge paper saver, as well – and makes updating inevitable changes much simpler to do. Some offices even use email to correspond with clients instead of mailing them paper copies of documents and letters.

One of the easiest and most cost-effective changes a law office can make is to purchase recycled paper products and use remanufactured printer ink cartridges. According to Office Depot, 2.5 pounds of metal and plastic is kept out of landfills each time a toner cartridge is remanufactured, which conserves about a half gallon of oil. For everyday printing jobs, using draft mode when quality isn't crucial is a great way to save ink. Unless it's essential that the document be in color, print in grayscale. Or better yet, avoid any unnecessary printing jobs to begin with.

For documents that must have hard copy versions, such as briefs, numerous pages can be saved just by printing on both the front and the back sides of the paper. Non-sensitive documents that have print on only one side can be delegated to the fax machine or be used as scrap paper.

To further cut down paper waste, have reusable dishes, flatware and glasses available for employees to use at meal or break times so less paper napkins and other disposable products are used. Paper goods in bathrooms and at sinks should be made with recycled ingredients. Offer pitchers of filtered water to employees and clients instead of bottled water and have free-trade, organic coffee available, as well.

When you partner up with employees and motivate them to make a few small changes, you could see a big difference in your electric bill – and a decrease in your company's carbon footprint. Set up employee equipment on power strips and encourage them to power down computers and turn off power strips completely at the end of the work day. Ask that all computers be set to energy saving mode. In fact, computers that go to "sleep" when no one is working on them can cut energy use by 70%!

According to the Sierra Club, artificial lighting accounts for 44% of electricity use in office buildings. Use sunlight

whenever possible, but when it's not, cut your lighting-related energy costs by up to 75% by using Energy Star-rated light bulbs and fixtures. Compact fluorescent bulbs are more expensive up front than incandescent bulbs, but are extremely economical because they will last 20 times longer. Make sure to have a lights-out policy when rooms are empty, or install timers or motion sensors that will do the job for you when light is not needed (does the oak covered conference room really need to be lit all day?!).

While the environmental benefits of going green are obvious, you might be surprised to know the ways in which promoting your sense of responsibility through GBB membership will benefit your company.

Corporate Responsibility – You want to make a difference in your community. A GBB membership will improve your image by demonstrating your dedication to the environment.

Marketing – Many clients and potential clients are conscious now more than ever about choosing service providers who will support superior sustainability practices. Let them know you are a dedicated steward of the environment.

Recruiting – Attract new talent to your firm from a new generation of environmentally-conscious lawyers who seek to be part of a green organization.

Positive Press – Become a GBB member and let us help you promote your firm as a green business. We can assist you in writing press releases and with other revenues of positive publicity so others will know you are an environmentally-responsible law firm.

Many law firms have recognized the importance of at least beginning their efforts towards sustainability. Their clients are going through this as well and it's important to stay with and ahead of clients.

About The Green Business Bureau

The mission of the Green Business Bureau is to foster environmental awareness among businesses and promote business practices that are both environmentally responsible and commercially beneficial. We serve as a national third-party program that provides certification for businesses that follow environmentally responsible practices. The GBB has developed an advanced online platform that helps businesses step by step implement sustainability practices. Visit at www.gbb.org

ALA Upcoming Events

January 2010

- | | |
|----|---------------------------------|
| 13 | Finance Section Meeting |
| 20 | Operations/IT Section Meeting |
| 27 | Human Resources Section Meeting |

February 2010

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 17 | Houston Chapter Luncheon
Office Space Trends:
What is happening in 2010 |
| 18 – 20 | ALA Law Firm Financial
Management Conference
Carefree Resort & Villas,
Carefree, AZ |



Top 5 New Year's Resolutions for Administrators

5. Join a Committee
4. Polish Your Meditation Skills
3. Attend Monthly Luncheons
2. Drink Less
1. Smile (and mean it!)



Business Partners – An Integral Part of Chapter Success

The Houston Chapter would like to thank the Business Partners in our community for their continued support of our Chapter. The Houston Chapter membership recognizes that collaborating with Business Partners is an indispensable resource ensuring that our organization continues to flourish. Responding to Business's calls and looking to our Business Partners helps to supply what is needed to run an office so that we can maintain the right products and services to create a successful legal administration. Our Business Partners play a vital role in the management and daily functions in our firms. Please be sure to browse the Business Partner Directory on our chapter website at www.alahou.org for a complete listing of current Business Partners which are categorized by industry. The Houston Chapter is committed to the continued cultivation of positive, mutually beneficial relations with Business Partners who serve the legal community.

One of the strengths of the ALA Houston Chapter is its strong relationship with Business Partners that support and service its member Firms. Without the support of these Business Partners, the Houston Chapter would not be able to provide our members with the quality education programs offered at the local level. These include the speakers at our monthly meetings, seminars, the annual retreat, and the publication of our monthly newsletter, *The Houston CourtYard*. Please remember to thank our Business Partners when you get the chance.

In addition to the wonderful benefits associated with the Houston Chapter, ALA also has resources that extend beyond our local program. If you visit the ALA National website (www.alanet.org) you will find helpful tools such as ALA's "Find a Legal Business" database. This national program can help you and your firm save time and money. There is also a Business Resources tab on the www.alanet.org website. This provides information about the importance of Business relations, knowing your target audience, and more. All Business Partners are invited to subscribe to the e-newsletter titled *ALA Means Business* using the online form located at www.alanet.org/resourceforBusiness/Businessnewsletter.asp. A link to this website can also be found on our local chapter website at www.alahou.org. If you have any questions or need assistance please contact Christina Marsden or Heather McConnell.

"Is It Just Me or What?"

By: Bill Harvey



While waiting for a Metro bus last month I noticed a U.S. Postal Service van parked at a curb, lights flashing. A few moments later a letter carrier arrived at the van pushing a dolly loaded with mixed mail in a stack of those ubiquitous plastic bins. But the top bin had only one type of mail in it – the instantly recognizable red Netflix return mail pouches. The bin was completely filled with them. Seeing them segregated into their own bin led me to believe they get some sort of special treatment from the U.S.P.S.

That same evening I retired to my den and conducted a routine postprandial clicker scroll through the list of available evening television entertainment (for which I pay dearly). Scroll, scroll. Here's one...The Nature Channel. Killer whales scooping baby seals off a beach – again? No. Scroll. Watch two heavily tattooed and bleeding men beat the tar out of each other in a cage? No. Scroll, scroll. Ah...House Hunters International. Oh please, not Costa Rica again. Are we in a circular error here? Aren't there venues other than Belize, Costa Rica, Spain and Italy where people hunt for vacation homes? Scroll, scroll, page scroll. Aha! The Military Channel! You'd think it's one of my favorites. Let's see. O.K. Oh, no. Not again. Rating the top ten fighting tanks, narrated by the same bald, cone headed military museum curator. Next up is Top Sniper (again). No. Scroll, page scroll. Here we go: Gordon Ramsey's F Word program about failing restaurants with filthy kitchens. Nope, not this soon after supper. Oh...here's one...How Dirty is Your House from BBC America. Dust mites, salmonella and plague lingering on people's bathroom surfaces. Please! One last chance. Scroll, scroll, scroll. The Science Channel. Surely I can find refuge here. Oh good...a show about picturesque sea coasts. Great. Wait a minute! Baby seals getting eaten by great white sharks along picturesque sea coasts? How many times must I watch the slow-mo of the death of that unfortunate baby seal in the jaws of that shark? Have television program producers got something for sharks and against baby seals? Oh, of

course...it's Shark Week again.

Mentally drained, my thumb throbbing, the clicker fell from my hand. After a short, pregnant and reflective pause it dawned on me why the Netflix pouches were getting special treatment today! With the current state and quality of television programs Netflix must be having a bonanza year! There are so many of them in circulation that the U.S.P.S. probably has set up a separate rate and handling program for them. There is simply not very much worth watching, at least for me, in the block of probably 100 channels for which I am forced to pay so that I can view the three or four I enjoy.

My eyes sweep the area near the television. I spot two Netflix pouches sitting by my Sony mega-telly. I decide to shift the cats off my lap and make the short pilgrimage to the DVD player. I load up the latest disk and fall back on the couch, allowing Annie Marie and Buster Brown back onto my lap. Oh good...Frost...a nice clean and mentally challenging British murder mystery. So what if I've seen it twice before. Dead people, yes...dead baby seals, no. And no sharks or killer whales. Life is once again restored to pleasantness.

For those of you who share my frustrations there may be a ray of hope on the horizon. The Federal Communications Commission has apparently received a huge number of complaints about the major cable and satellite providers cramming huge blocks of channels (which no one with breath in their body would ever wish to view) into their expensive plans. The FCC is set to propose legislation which would allow individuals the right to subscribe directly with program providers and to build a customized set of channels in which they have an interest. This would allow me to trim my list to about eight channels. No worries. I'm sure the legislation will be broad enough for viewers to enroll for channels about baby seal slaughters and bare knuckled brawlers. Everyone gets to choose, even if badly.

2009 Houston Chapter ALA Business Partners

TITANIUM

Total Technologies

PLATINUM

Madison Benefits Group, Inc.
Primus Networks



GOLD

Collier Legal Search
HIRECounsel
Kilpatrick Equipment Co
Safesite
ScoNet

BRONZE

Ad Hoc The Legal Placement Company
Business Insurance Group
Copy Source 1, Ltd.
Diversified Recruiting Services
DocuSystems
Duff, Kitchel & Company P.C.
EBF Office Products
Equitrac Corporation
FedEx Services
Graf Legal Network
Houston Express Couriers
IST Management Services
Legalpeople
Pathfinder/LL&D Ins. Group
Pye Legal Group
Rafte & Company
Ridgway's Management Services
The Common Source
The Westar Company

SILVER

Aramark
Document Technologies, Inc.
Frost Bank
IKON Office Solutions
Insurance Alliance
Insurance Network of America
Kastle Systems
Legal Specialties Plus
McCoy Workplace Solutions
Project Leadership Associates
Quest Personnel Resources
Star Engraving
Tejas Office Products
XVAND Technology

COPPER

ALL-STATE LEGAL
Amicus Solutions
Attorney Resource
Burnett Staffing Specialists
Charter Staffing
Corporate Care
Corporate Move Consulting
Corporate Outfitters
Cort
Gensler
Gibson Arnold & Associates, Inc.
Mach 5 Couriers
Nell McCallum & Associates, Inc.
Sealmess Web
Transnet Delivery Solutions





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Houston Chapter of
The Association of Legal Administrators*

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*Seen our website lately?
Check us out at www.alahou.org*

I Heard It On The List-Serve...



Are you enrolled in the Houston Chapter's List-Serve? If not you are missing out on what is perhaps one of the most useful tools offered by your Houston Chapter ALA.



Our List-Serve is a venue where members can quickly poll their peers for information such as business referrals, solutions to problems or simply what other local firms are doing in preparation for snowy weather.

Joining is simple: contact Naomi Stair at nstair@js-llp.com, and she'll set you up.

