

Winter 2008 Newsletter

LMA MPC

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Call for Articles...

Interested in submitting articles for future issues of the MPC Newsletter?

Contact Jennifer Smuts at

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President's Message

Did you ever find yourself sitting on a plane, taking notes at a meeting or participating in a team building exercise and wonder "how did I get here?" That just happened to me. As President of the Metro Philadelphia -Legal Marketing Association, I was invited to participate in a two-day LMA leadership training program. A coach named Richard Boyer led the audience, consisting of the LMA International Board, Chapter presidents and Committee chairs, in a program titled: *Leading from Within*. We focused on building connections through relationships and recognizing preference vs. behavior. (I was surprised to learn some things about myself and how I can work better with others to recognize and respect their communication preferences.)

Now over 20 years old and with nearly 20 chapters, LMA is growing strong. Membership is global and there are strategic alliances with other professional associations worldwide that continue to feed the potential of LMA. Service to the membership is of utmost importance. From QuickStart and webinars to the Senior Marketing Forum and chapter educational programs, there are invaluable opportunities and resources. This year over 300 submissions were entered for the Your Honor Awards. Good things are happening and law firms around the world want to showcase just how good it is. It's exciting to see how much the industry has grown in the 10 years that I've been a part of it.

My mind keeps wandering back to all of the people I met from across the country and the plethora of information I gleaned about the future direction of LMA. Over 200 volunteer board and committee members generously donate their time and talent to the growth of LMA and our profession. Tom Brokaw once said "It's easy to make a buck. It's a lot tougher to make a difference." LMA is full of talent that is making a difference. I'm proud to be a part of it.

Jenn Smuts
2008 President
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An Intern's Perspective

Joseph Laub, Media Relations Coordinator, Duane Morris LLP

My gateway into the world of legal marketing was my alma mater Drexel's co-op internship program. In my third year of a five-year journalism curriculum, I applied to Duane Morris with the goal of honing my writing skills and gaining experience in public relations, a field I had considered for a while.

Though the Drexel co-op cycle only lasts for 6 months, I ended up staying at Duane Morris a bit longer than that. Two years, two months and 18 days, to be exact. In fact, I think I may hold the world record for longest continuous internship. Therefore, though technically I am an ex-intern, my time at Duane Morris has taught me many things about the legal marketing intern experience, and how it differs from other types of internships.

First, by their nature, law firms and the field of legal marketing pose a unique challenge to any incoming intern. In many cases, the influx of new information about practice groups, areas of law, the dynamics of lateral hires, and, in the case of interns faced with copywriting duties, compliance with attorney advertising rules, can be overwhelming. In many instances, especially in the case of media relations, knowledge of legal terms is also a necessary skill. Combined with this is a steep learning curve. At Duane Morris, in my role as media relations intern, I was expected to be fairly proficient in the basic workings of law firm PR within a short period of time. I had to commit to the position by working to understand all I could about each deal and case that we were asked to publicize, and ensuring that I represented the firm well as one of its external communicators.

Second, I have found that legal marketing allows an intern to explore a wide scope of interests, more so than in many other industries. Beyond the areas of marketing that law firms employ—PR, event planning, graphic design, etc.--an intern may discover a love for the law, politics, journalism, public speaking, science (if the firm deals with IP matters), and other areas. This ability to explore many different areas is very beneficial to an intern, who can use the experience—whether positive or negative—to determine later career choices. I learned quickly that I was fascinated by many of the legal issues that the firm deals with on a daily basis. This interest was very helpful in working to distill complex matters into a form that was usable and attention-grabbing for the media.

Connected with the idea of finding an interest is the concept that legal marketing allows the student to carve out a niche where he or she can thrive if they are motivated to do so. In my case, I was able to combine my background in journalism and my interest in the law in a way that was and continues to be useful for the firm. I have been given the opportunity to ghost-write several articles on general law firm matters that have been published across the country. This has not only been beneficial to the firm, but it has allowed me to grow as a writer and a marketer.

Legal marketing is a unique field with a great range of opportunities for students who have the skills and the motivation to succeed. I have been fortunate to work with a wonderful team at Duane Morris both as an intern and now in a full-time position. I hope that the field will continue to grow and welcome a new generation of legal marketers.

Member Spotlight

Aria K. Vaida, Marketing Director, Cohen Seglias Pallas Greenhall & Furman PC

By Diane Roka, Practice Development Manager, Post & Schell, P.C.

How did you get involved in the LMA?

A good friend of mine had suggested I speak with Holly Lentz of Duane Morris. Holly had spoken to me about the LMA and its benefits. I thought to myself, what a great way to learn about the new trends in marketing and meet with others in similar situations. The LMA is a great way to learn from others about "what works" in marketing. I have met so many wonderful people that are doing what I do.

What made you decide to take an active role in the membership committee?

On the membership committee I will be able to meet and get to know many new faces. I am excited to give others the welcoming experience that I received when joining the LMA.

What is your favorite part of your job?

My favorite part of my job is working with the attorneys on an individual basis. I work with many attorneys on their individual marketing plans. It is exciting to see individual business development efforts take on a life of their own. Most lawyers were never taught the basics of marketing and/or sales. I enjoy guiding them in strategic directions to make them and the firm more profitable. I feel a strong sense of pride when an associate gives his or her first seminar or brings in a new client!

What type of work did you do before your current position? How has it helped you in what you are doing now?

Prior to my current position I was associated with two law firms. I began my career as a manager of client services & operations and moved to an operations position that I transitioned into an active marketing role within that firm. After meeting Holly Lentz, I was determined to move to a firm where I could completely focus on marketing. My current position immerses me in marketing with attorneys that are eager to be trained in taking our message to the public.

Over the years, who or what has been your biggest influence?

There are several mentors that have influenced me. I would say that I tend to look for people who I would aspire. I look for positive people with outgoing personalities from whom I can learn. I make it my business to surround myself with the brightest and best in the industry.

How do you stay current?

Well, besides the LMA, which allows me to pick the brains of many marketing professionals, it is very important to understand the nuances and intricacies of the legal profession. You will always find the latest book on marketing in my briefcase and I often meet with other marketing professionals to brainstorm ideas and trends.

LMA MPC January Educational Program: The Zen of Law Firm Rankings - Taking Control of the Rankings Process

LMA MPC kicked off 2008 with an educational program focused on the how to better handle and coordinate law firm lists and directories. Drinker Biddle kindly hosted our first morning program and we welcomed Vivian Hood from Jaffe Associates.

Whether it's *Chambers*, *Best Lawyers*, *Lawdragon*, 40 Under 40, Top (insert practice here) Lawyers, or any of the myriad lists, directories, and rankings now prevalent in the legal profession, firms want to know if they are listed, where and which of their competitors are listed, which rankings are credible, and which ones require "pay to play."

As of mid-January, Jaffe Associates' RankingsForLawyers™ service had researched more than 900 rankings, awards, surveys and lists relevant to the legal industry, as found in business and legal media in the top 100 U.S. markets, as well as in Canada and Europe. There are, at last count, 31 in Pennsylvania alone! New lists appear virtually each month, and are a reflection of and in response to market forces. How does your firm decide which ones are important? How do you avoid being snared by a publisher who simply seeks a way to sell profiles, web listings and advertising to the "chosen" firms and attorneys? Does your firm have a process by which it manages this colossal undertaking?

Perhaps your firm already has a specific selection of rankings that it focuses on each year - but what happens when a partner asks about a new ranking that he would like to be recognized in, how do you make the decision as to whether it is appropriate and credible? How are you learning about and keeping track of the ever-increasing number of new rankings that probably should be on your radar? Is the listing worth your time and attention, and the firm's valuable marketing dollars? Are there ways to increase your chances of inclusion or a higher ranking?

Consideration also must be given to the fact that the omission, whether intentional or not, from certain lists or rankings also can speak volumes more than the ranking itself.

Law firms should implement these actions to streamline the rankings process:

1. Determine one person who shall be responsible for managing the surveys, lists and rankings. Some larger firms have a full-time person dedicated, others add the responsibility to over-burdened marketing directors or coordinators, and others seek help from marketing consultants.
2. Research and identify the national, regional, industry, and local lists to determine which ones are important to the firm.
3. Review the methodology to determine whether it is credible, and, equally important, verify whether it is read and used by your target audiences.
4. Organize, organize, organize! Whether you dedicate a separate calendar,

create a spreadsheet or develop a contact system or a checklist, keep it current with deadline information, contact details, past submission material, and track results.

5. Pay attention to deadlines and allow enough time to prepare nominations.
6. Capitalize on a ranking achievement by alerting clients, prospects and referral sources, internally within the firm's offices, on the firm's Web site, in recruiting materials, in appropriate attorney bios, alumni newsletters and in relevant industry trades publications. Know which local business media will mention this type of news, as well.

Vivian Hood is Vice President, Public Relations with legal marketing communications firm Jaffe Associates, Inc. She can be reached at hoodv@jaffeassociates.com or 904-220-1915.

Change Your E-mail? Share Your Thoughts?

If you need to change your e-mail address or are having problems? Send us an [e-mail](#).

If you'd like to share your thoughts about program ideas, chapter feedback, or requests to the MPC LMA Officers, send us an [e-mail](#).

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