

**SMALL LAW FIRM  
FACILITIES - A UNIQUE  
FREE BENEFIT TO  
MEMBERS**

**Attorney Work Space:**

**Mon - Fri: 9am - 8:45 pm**

**Saturday: 10 am - 4:45 pm**

*Available on a walk-in basis*

**Conference Room:**

**Mon - Fri: 9:30 am- 7:30 pm**

**Saturday: 10:30 am - 4:45 pm**

*To reserve for 2-hour intervals, contact Ronald Mirvis at (212) 382-6748 or by e-mail at [rmirvis@nycbar.org](mailto:rmirvis@nycbar.org).*

**CLE PROGRAMS OF INTEREST**

Investigating Workplace Complaints:  
Maintaining a Fair Environment and  
Avoiding Litigation

*December 6, 2006 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.*

Commanding Presence: Communication  
& Presentation Skills For Lawyers

*December 8, 2006 9:00 a.m. - 4:45 p.m.*

The "Power" Of Powerpoint: How  
Presentation Software Will Make Your  
Arguments More Effective

*December 13, 2006 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.*

Legal Ethics & the Risk Averse Lawyer

*December 19, 2006 9:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m.*

**NYC BAR EVENTS OF INTEREST**

A Personal Finance Program for  
Members: Relevant Investment Strategies  
in Today's Market

*December 13, 2006 6:00 p.m.*

Breakfast Series: Practicing Civil  
Litigation in New York State Supreme  
Court Part II - Practicing in a Commercial Part  
*December 15, 2006 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.*

**A NOTE FROM THE SLFC DIRECTOR**

*I would like to thank everyone who attended and participated in the Third Annual Law Practice Management Symposium on November 1, 2006. You have all helped make the Symposium a success. At this time, all of the attendees received an email requesting comments on the Symposium. Please take a couple of minutes to send them to me. Your suggestions will help make the 2007 Symposium even better.*

*Wishing all solos and small law firm practitioners a joyous holiday season and a productive new year;*

- Alla Roytberg, Esq.

As 2006 comes to a close and we reflect on the best and the worst decisions we have made in our law practices, it is always helpful to go back to basics and review the dos and don'ts in the "law practice" classics such as the ones listed below:

**ABA Books of the Month**



Regular Price: \$99.95

Member Price: \$85.00



Regular Price: \$69.95

Members Price: \$59.00

Order online at <http://www.nycbar.org/SmallFirmCenter/bookshop2.htm>.

**Save The Date**

January 18th, 2007

12:30 - 2:00 pm

**SMALL LAW FIRM LUNCHEON**

*Technology- Data Protection,  
Security and Confidentiality*

## MEMBER BENEFITS FOR SOLOS AND SMALL FIRMS

### Free Member Postings:

To find or offer office space, affiliate with other attorneys or advertise your legal services, send an email with content to aroytberg@nycbar.org

### ABA Books 15% Discount:

To order, visit [www.nycbar.org](http://www.nycbar.org), and click on the ABA Books Coupon on the top-right. If you are interested in a different ABA book send an email requesting the book to aroytberg@nycbar.org

### Free Westlaw Forms:

To access Westlaw Forms' Databases visit [www.nycbar.org](http://www.nycbar.org) and click on the member login button on the top right.

### Medical Insurance:

3 plans from Oxford offered by Marsh Affinity Group Services.

### Professional Liability Insurance:

Offered through Bertholon Rowland

### Express Package Delivery:

Up to 25% Discount through DHL Express

### Legal Research:

LexisNexis special packages for solos and small firms

## TAKING STOCK AND SETTING YOUR LAW PRACTICE ON COURSE FOR 2007

*"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant."  
- Robert Louis Stevenson*

Since the end of the year presents us with a natural opportunity to review what worked and what didn't in 2006, I have assembled the following check list to help solos and small firms put their fingers on the pulse of their businesses and assess their needs for the New Year:

### A. "VISION" TEST

*"If one does not know to which port one is sailing, no wind is favorable"  
- Seneca*

1. Did you ever write a Business Plan? Preparing one will certainly help you get your business organized and will provide a handy "reality check" list against which you could measure the progress of your business. For free help on writing a business plan contact Ira Davidson, Director of the Manhattan SBDC at Pace University, 163 William Street, 16th Floor, New York, NY 10038, Tel: (212) 346-1900.
2. Do you have a system to keep track of leads and new clients? If not, implement it. It will help you assess how your practice does from year to year.
3. Does your chosen area of practice bring in enough revenue? How does your monthly profit compare with your original projections? If you are not getting enough recurring business, you may need to review your practice areas or adjust your fee structure.
4. Are you overlooking growth opportunities? Now is a good time to consider joining a networking group or a new committee at the NYC Bar. The Small Law Firms Committee at the New York City Bar sponsors 3 separate networking groups which gives lawyers and other business professions a monthly opportunity to "pitch" their business and exchange valuable information. Are your bills being paid regularly? Now is the time to take necessary measures without having to carry over these headaches to 2007.

### B. HOW IS YOUR "VIRTUAL" REPUTATION?

1. Does your Website Home Page need a Facelift? At this point, whether or not one would need a website is a moot issue. Every lawyer should have one, even if it is as simple as an online business card.
2. Here are just a few questions that you should ask your Web Hosting Company:

## NEW BENEFITS FOR SOLOS AND SMALL FIRMS

### BlumbergExcelsior

- 20% Discount
- Over 250 Blumberg online forms 10-15% off;
- Legal Applications 20% off;
  - a) Bankruptcy Filings
  - b) HUD-1 Closing Online
  - c) Severance Agreements Online
  - d) NY Uncontested Divorce Online
  - e) NY Net Worth Statement Online
- Software Programs 15% off;
  - a) Blankrupter 4.0
  - b) Blazer Forms [Blumberg on CD]
  - c) FLIP
- DL Drafting Libraries 20 % off

### HSBC Legal Team's Comprehensive Package

- Single Point of Contact with a dedicated Relationship Manager
- Business Revolving Lines of Credit from \$25,000 to \$350,000
- Free Business Checking with free check order and bill pay
- Attorney Escrow Accounts (central control, client sub-accounts, etc.)

For further information please visit [www.nycbar.org](http://www.nycbar.org) and click on Small Law Firm Center.

- a. What level of security do I have for information I store on the website?
  - b. How much storage space does my website have?
  - c. Do I have a unique domain name appropriate to my practice?
  - d. How many email accounts should I have?
3. What type of information does your website provide?
- a. Do you have Attorney Bios and Practice areas?
  - b. Do you provide general information to the public about the services you provide? Are there FAQ's for potential clients?
  - c. Don't forget to upload your articles and photos.

**4. Please note that new ethics rules governing attorney advertising in New York are expected to become effective on January 15, 2006. To make sure that your website is in compliance with the new rules, check the CLE calendar of the NYC Bar. A CLE program on the new advertising rules will be offered in March, 2007.**

## C. DOES THE "LOOK" OF YOUR OFFICE MAKE CLIENTS FEEL WELCOME?

*"The customer is the only critic whose opinion matters at all."  
- Mark Twain*

1. Are you still using the same "hand me down" desks you received from your predecessor when you rented your office 3 years ago? Does your chair leave you with a backache by the end of the day?
2. Should you invest into a new coffee machine, or opt for an espresso/cappuccino maker to cheer up your clients and employees?
3. What about getting a couple of office plants and colorful brochures which highlight your practice in the waiting area?

## D. ARE YOU EXPERIENCING TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES?

1. How old are your computers, printers, fax machines? Do you need an upgrade? Should you finally buy a scanner and make a slight advance on the road towards "paperless office"? How about getting a new shredder to better protect privacy of your clients?
2. Review your telephone/internet access plans. Do you need additional lines, or can you cut your costs by switching some of them to VOIP? What about your personal cell phone? Is it time to switch to a Blackberry or a Treo?

**E. ARE YOU UNDER/OVER/APPROPRIATELY INSURED?**

1. If you do not offer health insurance to your employees, should you? To inquire about health insurance offered through the New York City Bar click on <http://www.marshaffinity.com/assoc/abcny.html#Anchor-Medical-35326>.
2. Review coverage limits on your professional liability insurance, your overhead expenses insurance, your disability and premises liability insurance and any other types of insurance coverage for which you pay during the year. Are any changes in order? To find out how the New York City Bar can help you lower your insurance costs and/or obtain necessary coverage click on <http://www.nycbar.org/MarketPlace/Insurance.htm>.

**F. ARE YOU READY FOR UNCLE SAM?**

1. Schedule an appointment to meet with your CPA to discuss your anticipated tax liability for 2006 and brainstorm about tax saving strategies for 2007;
2. Don't forget to make your charitable contributions before the end of the year;
3. Review your retirement strategy and make necessary deposits.

**G. SHOULD YOU HIRE MORE HELP IN 2007?**

1. Are you understaffed? Do some of your employees appear idle while others are always swamped? Prepare an "end of the year" checklist for employees and ask them to list tasks they perform every day, every week and once a month. As a result you may want to re-allocate some of the work among your employees. Consider a bonus plan which would reward hard workers.
2. Should you consider outsourcing part of the work to virtual secretarial services, per diem attorneys or part time paralegals?
3. Do you need to hire an office administrator? For more information on how to find a law office administrator in New York visit [www.alanet.org](http://www.alanet.org).
4. How much should you pay your staff? See [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com) for additional information.
5. If you are a solo practitioner make sure that you have a reliable back-up attorney who could handle your cases in case of an emergency, or if you simply wish to take a vacation. Now is a good time to update your back-up attorney information for 2007 and provide it to your Professional Liability Carrier.

In summary, an honest yearly health check of your practice will enlighten you and help you succeed in the coming year. If the review process confirms your success in 2006, I congratulate you. If it does not, do not lose heart and recite the words of Thomas Edison, who said "I haven't failed. I've found 10,000 ways that don't work."

## **TECH TIPS OF THE MONTH - HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM A TECH SUPPORT CALL**

At one time or another, we all have to call customer care or tech support for a computer question or problem. Here are some good tips for making it a productive call.

1. Always remember that the person at the other end of the line is another human being and deserves the same respect that you want to get from them. They are just doing their job to the best of their ability with the tools and information provided to them, and they are usually rated on how many calls they resolve per shift. What does this mean to you as the person calling support for help?
2. Be pleasant and pronounce their name correctly - ask them to repeat it if necessary, and if that doesn't work ask if they have a nickname and use that.
3. Make sure that you have a pen and paper handy to write down what they tell you to click on or type. This might add a bit of time to the call, but it is a good idea to take detailed notes, since a lot of computer problems happen more than once or take more than one try to fix. The same procedure may also be used to fix the same problem if it occurs again, or another future problem, so having good notes can shorten or even eliminate your next call. Keep your notes organized where you can find them again.
4. Have all necessary info, such as hardware models, software versions, and serial numbers, in one place before you call. Write down the problem before you call; being prepared makes it easier to explain. Then reread what you wrote down and see if you understand it. If you don't, then they won't, and the resolution will take longer. When reading it to the tech support person, make sure to include the error messages EXACTLY as they appear on your computer.
5. Now you have your problem written down and all the important information in one place. You have a pen and paper to take notes and enough time to sit on hold for an hour and spend an hour on the phone fixing the problem. Yes, it might be only 10 minutes but let's be prepared. Rushing usually does not help.
6. Make sure if you call from your cell or cordless phone that it has enough battery to last the call. According to a tech support manager from a large company, the number of calls where the caller's cell phone dies and they have to start over on hold because the tech calling back gets voicemail is unbelievable. Give them a call back number where they can reach you in case you do get cut off. Note - if you are calling your ISP or voice phone provider (such as Vonage), don't call from the same line they provide - you might be asked to reboot your router or the device the phone is connected to.
7. While you are on hold waiting for help, breathe deeply and stay relaxed. The person on the other end may be hard to understand and may be stressed out from doing this all day long and dealing with difficult people. Make sure to thank them and ask them how is the weather there, even if you think they are from another part of the world. Work through the language barrier. The person in a foreign country might be hard to understand, but there is a good chance they might have a PhD or two and be very well educated, so please be patient. If the communication problem continues and you are not progressing you can ask to be transferred to another call center, or you can call back at a different time and get a different accent. (Please remember that there are more accents from call centers in the US than oversea.) Follow their directions to help resolve the problem. Write down what they tell you to do as well as the feedback the computer gives you including any messages.

Here is an example of a successfully shortened tech support call:

The client's server keeps crashing and is very slow. The problem is a hardware failure that L&D Computer staff is able to trou-

ble-shoot over the phone. We then tell the client to write down the problem in detail and email or fax it to us for review before calling support, since they want to make the call directly themselves. We review it and add two steps that they left out of the troubleshooting summary. The client calls tech support in order to get the faulty hardware replaced. They read what they had written down to the support person, who says "thank you very much," asks them to repeat a few parts for his notes, asks for their shipping address, ships them the replacement part, and then calls to follow up. The entire support call is under 10 minutes once they get through.

In contrast, another client who has the same hardware failure calls support without writing down the problem first, and once they got through to the support person, they spend two and a half hours on the phone, and L&D has to come on site and spend an additional two hours on the phone resolving the issue.

This is an example of how to handle a tech support call, since a little preparation time up front can save you significant time later. It is also an example of how a consultant can save you even more time since we deal with tech support often and know better how to quickly get through support.

To sum up: patience, respect, and having the issue well documented are the keys to getting the best support. The Tech Tips of the Month have been contributed by Leonard H. Shostak of L&D Computer Consulting Corp., [www.ldcomp.com](http://www.ldcomp.com).