the Verdict

ALAMN
A Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators

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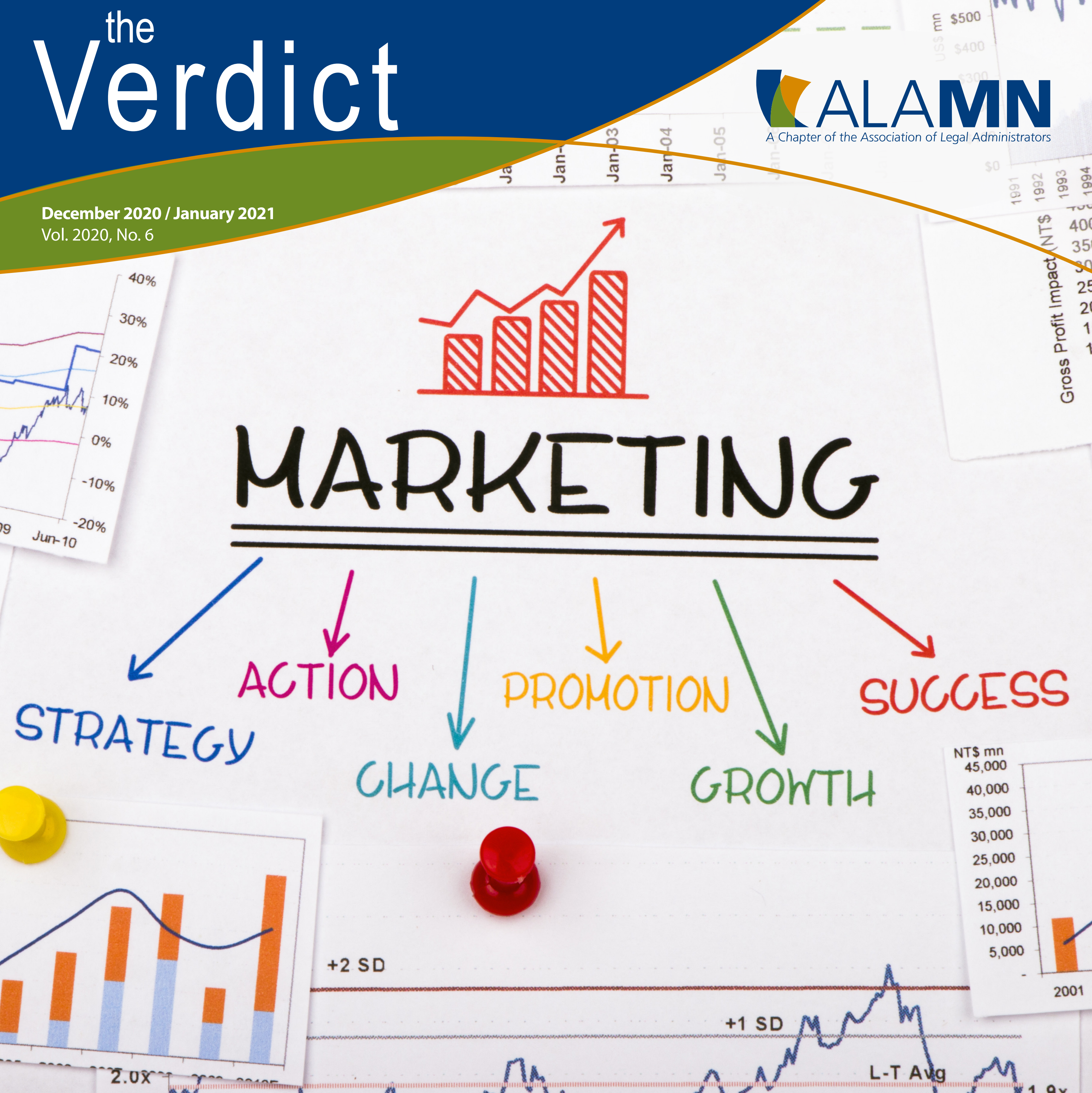

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

*By Kelly Thaemert, CLM, ALA**MN** President*

Well, we made it. Here we are at the end of 2020, a year no one wants to relive. But, we can all say we lived through it, and we will live to see 2021. Thank goodness we have each other, because this year would have been much harder without the help of our members and beloved Business Partners.

In November I participated in our BPAC (Business Partner Advisory Council) meeting with some of our Business Partners, our BPRT (Business Partner Relations Team), and fellow board members. It was wonderful to hear our Business Partners tell us that we should brag about all the chapter has accomplished this year. So many of our amazing volunteers have worked very hard this year to make sure that our members and our Business Partners were still able to get so much out of memberships and sponsorships. Because we were barely able to meet in person, we tend to lose site of all of the great things that did happen this year.

While we have not had our normal meetings, education sessions, socials, etc., this year, we were still able to host virtual meetings, education, socials, etc. Many of these events looked very different from previous years, but fortunately we have this thing called Zoom, which brought us all together.

Ideas were shared between members and Business Partners, and because of so many great ideas, we were still able to have a little fun this year. Our Summer Social was virtual, and GoGame hosted us. We were actually able to meet in person for our Fall Social at Central Park in Roseville, during which we enjoyed individually packaged charcuterie snacks. We hosted Foot in the Door Socials with our Business Partners, Minnetonka level and above, where the Cooks of Crocus Hill helped us quickly learn how insufficient some of us were in the kitchen. We still had a great time socializing, laughing, and trying to cook or bake. Also, I know this seems like forever ago, but we were able to host our education conference in February, right before this pandemic began.

So, as undesirable as this year may have been, we still have so much to be thankful for. We have amazing members who have shared so many ideas (and tips about where to purchase hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes). We have our Business Partners who played a very crucial role this year. Without all of you and all of your ideas, we would probably still be trying to purchase hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes, or we would probably still be trying to figure out how to work remotely. But seriously, this year came with a lot of challenges, but we could not have done it without our co-chairs, volunteers, members, and Business Partners. I will forever be grateful to everyone for their support throughout this year, but I will forever try to forget this year ever happened!

With all of that said, I truly want to wish all of you a safe and healthy holiday season and a happy and successful 2021!

ALA**MN** Has Adopted ALA's Mission Statement

ALA is the premier professional association connecting leaders and managers within the legal industry. We provide extensive professional development, collaborative peer communities, strategic operational solutions, and business partner connections empowering our members to lead the business of law.

ALAMN CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DECEMBER 2020

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
29	30	1	**2**	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	**15**	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	2

JANUARY 2021

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

***PLEASE NOTE:**

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (SIG) attendees need not be ALAMN members

DECEMBER

2 **Large Firm SIG Meeting**
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

15 **Facilities SIG Meeting**
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

JANUARY

6 **Large Firm SIG Meeting**
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

PERSONAL TOUCHES IN A VIRTUAL WORLD

By Vicki LaBarge, ALL-STATE LEGAL

So, traditional business development activities are out the window right? In-person events such as lunches, dinners, and golf outings are just not happening. Other activities such as seminars and client meetings are now mostly virtual.

With all the uncertainty, planning and re-planning, and remote working, personal connections are more important than ever. Yet they are so much harder to foster. But it is not impossible. There are still some great ways to make personal connections and enhance your business development activities.

First and foremost, you must make sure the tone and message are reflective of what is important to your audience right now. Then, you should ensure that every touch reinforces your commitment to serving your clients' needs today, tomorrow and in the future.

There are a few ways you can strengthen your message in a personal way.

Handwritten Note Cards

Right up there with your fingerprints and DNA, there isn't anything much more personal than your handwriting. Even if it's a little messy or hard to read, taking the time to handwrite a message to someone can make a big difference. The impact? The recipient knows that you've put part of yourself, your time, and your thoughts around reaching out. What is more personal than that?

Holiday Cards

With almost a year of online meetings and excessive email communication, a physical card in the mail will let current and prospective clients know that you value them and are still available to support them.

Appreciation Gifts

Everyone wants to feel appreciated. Whether it is a thank you to prospective clients for attending an online seminar, a gift to current customers to recognize their loyalty, or an acknowledgement of the hard work and dedication of your employee base – a small token of appreciation can help foster goodwill.

However, choosing the right item or items can be difficult. And if you still have restrictions for in-office resources to help pick, pack, and ship packages, it becomes more difficult. Larger firms may choose to use online appreciation stores that feature firm-approved gift/give-away items to streamline the process. Mid-size and smaller firms can use a promotional products partner that will provide them with a list of creative items that can be fulfilled within budget and on schedule.

Next Steps

What is your firm doing to adapt to more virtual business development and still maintain a personal feel? We'd love to hear about your plans and creative ideas! Not sure where to start? ALL-STATE LEGAL has spent the last 8 months helping firms keep their business development at peak performance. Contact us today for ideas and more.

Founded in 1946, ALL-STATE LEGAL is the legal industry's most trusted rebranding specialty printer with a national footprint, a best-in-class online ordering platform, and an experienced client service team. Over 94% of clients surveyed say they would recommend us to a colleague or friend. In 2020, we have been helping firms with their reopening plans, PPE/cleaning supplies, business development ideas.

KNOW YOUR LEGAL JARGON

Lis pendens – Latin for *"suit pending."*
Often used in the context of public announcements of legal proceedings to come.

October

2020

2 Year Service Award
Presented to
Association of Legal Administrators Minnesota Chapter

In recognition of 2 year of volunteer service at
People Serving People

People Serving People

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM "BEST PRACTICES IN CLIENT RELATIONS & COMMUNICATIONS DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES" WEBINAR

Julie Savarino, MBA, JD, is no stranger to building and maintaining relationships within the legal community. A best-selling author and licensed attorney, Julie is one of the highest-rated speakers, trainers, and coaches in the industry and currently serves as chief client services and development officer for Business Development Inc. SurePoint had the privilege of being accompanied by Julie as part of our Virtual Office Webinar series where she shared her expert insight on ways to best navigate in our current state, and how to strengthen and maintain client relationships during periods of uncertainty. Below are some best practices for client relations and communications during uncertain times:

Focus on what's most important – you!

It is crucial that we are all taking extra care of ourselves and our loved ones during this time. If you aren't taking steps to ensure that you are your best self, it's impossible to provide your clients with the exceptional service they deserve and have learned to expect. Take care of yourself as a human being first. Professionally, schedule some time each week to write down and prioritize projects and client outreach initiatives, and to establish a list of professional resources with whom you should engage. Connecting with current and former clients with whom you enjoy working will reenergize you and your work and provide you with a sense of productivity.

Now is also a great time to reflect on your career and professional goals. Have you ever taken a personality assessment? If not, you may want to check out one of the many assessment tests available as a way to discover your personal strengths and weaknesses. These results will help you to identify areas in which you are successful in communicating with your clients and colleagues, and allow you to make adjustments as needed in other areas with opportunities for improvement.

Consider the client's perspective – be a resource, not a sales pitch.

Despite our best efforts to operate at our normal pace, business is not as usual right now. The stress levels of attorneys and legal professionals are exponentially higher during this time, and it is important to be mindful of when, what, and how we are communicating. Five things to consider before reaching out to your clients include:

- Your clients are experiencing information overload and they're less than thrilled about it. Make sure that when you are contacting them, you have a clear purpose for reaching out (even if that purpose is to say "hi" and to check in to see how they're doing) and you aren't contacting/emailing them more than necessary.
- When you do reach out to your clients, make sure that you present your information in a way that is easy to digest and useable. Format your content in concise executive summaries or as bullet point lists or charts. Presenting them with short yet valuable snippets of information allows them to quickly review the content and pass on to their colleagues who may find the information useful.
- Don't use this crisis as an opportunity to sell your service or product.
- Assess your client development process and leverage technology to enhance your relationships and to stay informed of your clients' needs. Strive to be useful, helpful, and knowledgeable to your clients, and to provide them with options that they may not have known existed or thought of before for improving remote operations.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM "BEST PRACTICES IN CLIENT RELATIONS & COMMUNICATIONS DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES" WEBINAR – CONTINUED

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- Remember why your clients hired you. They've come to you because they have trust and confidence in you as a professional. Make sure you are continuing to build and maintain their trust and confidence by engaging with them; actively listening to what they're saying; restating or summarizing their words to reinforce active listening and to better understand their needs; and follow through on the things you say you're going to do. Julie shared a powerful quote with the attendees, "The power goes to who listens, not who argues or tries to persuade."

Initiate tailored outreach with a humanistic approach.

Now more than ever, it is important that you show your clients that you're more than just an attorney or other legal professional – you're also a human. During every communication, ask three questions: How are you doing? Is there anything that you, your family, or your organization needs? How can I help?

Avoid contributing to content fatigue.

Clients don't want content, they want answers. In addition to keeping your communications clear and concise, it is imperative that you review every piece of content before it is distributed. At all costs, avoid initiating an email by leading with your firm name or by referencing COVID-19. Instead, start by identifying a pain point or business issue and discuss how you plan to solve the problem. For example, Julie shared that taking an industry and role-based approach or developing a risk assessment or FAQ tool would be more compelling than simply reporting out on the latest news.

Leverage your content – translate spoken words into a written format.

When most people hear the word "content," they primarily think of a formal press release or a blog post focused on one specific topic. While these are great avenues for distributing ideas and facts, there are other ways to develop useful content for individual or mass distribution. For example, if your law firm hosts a webinar or podcast, record the firm's remarks or use a transcription app. Then, take the content that was verbally discussed and translate it into writing to be distributed through your firm's website or in email outreach. For example, did your CEO just give a presentation on ways to best leverage your law firm's ERP solution? Great – now review the deck and extract 3 – 5 key takeaways to share on your company's LinkedIn page. These are simple yet effective ways to make the most of your content, remain top-of-mind for your clients, and to position your firm as proactive thought leaders within the community.

Julie Savarino's full presentation can be found here.

About SurePoint:

SurePoint Technologies is a leading provider of financial and practice management software to law firms nationwide. For more than 40 years law firms have relied on SurePoint's tailored enterprise software to drastically improve workflow and maximize financial performance. With a community of nearly 50,000 members, SurePoint continues to transform the legal industry by enabling law firms to unlock higher performance by freeing lawyers of administrative burdens so they can spend far more time focusing on their clients and their practice. Learn more at surepoint.com.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

By Bernadette Theis

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee was pleased to present Ritu Bhasin as the guest speaker at the ALA**MN** General Meeting held on October 13, 2020 via Zoom. She is an award-winning speaker, author, and expert in diversity and inclusion, women's advancement, and authentic leadership. In fall of 2017, she released her Amazon bestselling book, *The Authenticity Principle: Resist Conformity, Embrace Differences, and Transform How You Live, Work, and Lead*.

"As a Leader, How Can You Interrupt Racial Bias in the Legal Workplace?"

Her presentation talked about how in this pivotal moment when there is a spotlight on racial injustice, many leaders are expressing a commitment to being more racially inclusive and a desire to attain more tools and frameworks for interrupting racial bias in the workplace. In this workshop, inclusion expert Ritu Bhasin delved deep into all of this and why racial bias lives in our bodies and minds, how it manifests in the workplace and what to do about it.

She covered topics on acknowledging and understanding systems of racial supremacy, power and privilege, key allyship concepts in the context of racial inclusion, how to create safe spaces for difficult discussions around racial bias, critical behavior changes that leaders make in order to interrupt racial bias, building resilience: why living in more of an embodied and mindful way is paramount for interrupting racial bias and how you can make this happen, and practical strategies for interrupting racial bias and better serving as an ally.

After the workshop, all attendees were provided with a list of resources from Bias Worksheets "Identify Your Biases," "Understand How Bias Affects You," and "Shield Against Bias Coming Your Way," Video links to "Change Your Life Through the Power of Scripting" and "Being an Advocate for Equity," Self-Care Worksheets "Commit to a Self-Care Practice" and "Create Your Own Affirmations," Blog Post "6 Simple Mindfulness Techniques You can Do Anywhere," and an e-copy of Rhitu's book, "The Authenticity Principle."

My favorite part of the workshop was a tool she provided that you could apply to your own workplace. Have you ever been a room with a group of friends or co-workers and one of them makes a rude, offensive, racist, or sexist comment, and suddenly time just stops and you are stunned and frozen? You're in your head thinking, "Did this person really just say that?" Or you try to rationalize the moment in your head by saying, "I'm sure this person didn't mean what they said," or, "Maybe I heard it wrong." Then you go on with your day like nothing happened, never addressing the inappropriate comment, and frustrated for not knowing what to say. A lot of us have been in that position, including me. Ritu Bhasin described the same exact scenario, and she advised on how to battle the situation by being prepared through scripting. Scripting is planning in advance what you will say during a tense and difficult moment to avoid freezing up. The key is practicing and memorizing your script so you can pull it out of your back pocket when the moment arises. This tool is very useful for interrupting racial bias.

No one was more excited to hear about Ritu presenting at our own General Meeting than I was. I have followed her YouTube videos, as I find her experiences and stories very relatable. Her video, "The right way to ask questions about your colleague's race," made me laugh. Her video, "My hurtful racist encounter with a client," made me cry. And, "My ethnic identity crisis," really connected with me and my experiences as an immigrant. Rather than write about those videos, I encourage you to go to YouTube and watch them for yourself. She unapologetically touches on subject of racism and racial bias that can be sensitive and uncomfortable at times, however, digging deep is the only way to discovery, learning, understanding, and ultimately, compassion.

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee would like to thank everyone involved for all their hard work and all the members for their participation, and for making this well-attended and well-received event possible.

ALAMN COMMUNITY SERVICE – THE FOOD GROUP

On Tuesday, November 17, ALA**MN** Members and Business Partners volunteered at The Food Group (formerly Emergency Foodshelf Network) in New Hope. This is the first time our organization has volunteered at The Food Group, and it was a wonderful experience. We assisted with packing holiday packs for the Fare For All program. Our volunteer team packed over 10,000 pounds of food, and each volunteer packed enough food to feed 636 people in need. It was nice to be together and make a difference!

The Food Group is a local nonprofit focused on using nutritious food to strengthen community. It works at the intersection of food access, equity, and nutrition issues related to food and hunger in 32 counties in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The Food Group breaks down barriers to growing good food locally and getting good food to those who need it most.

Thank you to our volunteers!

- Mark Brauch – Larkin Hoffman Daly & Lindgren Ltd.
- Pam Gerads – Merchant and Gould
- Dan Herman – Fluid Interiors – Haworth
- Katherine Hubbard – Madigan, Dahl & Harlan, P.A.
- Sheila Johnson – Minnesota State Bar Association
- Sarah Kostial – Associated Bank
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- Pat Stender – Cousineau, Van Bergen, McNee & Malone, P.A.

THE CASE FOR ENCOURAGING NON-ATTORNEYS TO USE LINKEDIN

By Nick Manty

We all know LinkedIn can be a powerful tool for business development, but it can also be a powerful tool to empower and engage a firm's non-attorneys. LinkedIn isn't the only way to engage a firm's non-attorneys, but it can be a very powerful one.

Empowering non-attorneys to use LinkedIn is important

It might not be immediately obvious why firms should encourage non-attorneys to use LinkedIn. They don't have their own clients, so what's the point? Yet, just as there are non-sales benefits for attorneys to be on LinkedIn, there are many reasons to encourage your firm's non-attorneys to join the platform.

Seeing what peers at other firms are doing

This is one of the most obvious uses of LinkedIn. It is a social media after all, but it's also one of the most powerful uses. Building a strong network helps someone feel secure in their position at their firm. Employees who feel secure—and not scared or nervous—will be more ambitious, more confident, and more willing to speak up when they have ideas. Plus, your employees will learn from the posts they read.

Seeing thought leadership from other non-attorneys

This shouldn't take much convincing. If you're reading this in the ALA**MN** Verdict, then you already understand the power of thought leadership. Even if the reader doesn't agree with a piece, they will still be thinking critically about how to do their job and how to improve it. That's momentum from which your firm can benefit.

Sharing what your firm is doing

One cannot underestimate the value of employees who are so engaged that they want to share thought leadership and other news from your firm. A non-attorney who takes enough pride in your firm to spread the cool things you're doing is amazing, and there's no reason not to encourage it. And their enthusiasm may spread. Less engaged employees will see their posts and be encouraged to get in on the action. High-achieving non-attorneys at other firms will also see this, raising the profile of your firm.

The dream: non-attorneys creating their own thought leadership

If non-attorneys sharing firm news raises your firm's profile, then non-attorneys creating their own thought leadership will doubly raise it. If your firm can empower its non-attorneys enough that they become experts in whatever they do—accounting, marketing, HR, etc.—think of all the top talent you'll be able to attract. Not to mention, if you have employees who care about their career enough to speak or write about it, they'll be committed to doing a good job, won't they?

Ways firm management can encourage non-attorneys to use LinkedIn

Now that you're a strong believer in encouraging your non-attorneys to use LinkedIn, here are some ways to encourage non-attorneys to be active on LinkedIn.

Communicate

By far the easiest way to empower a firm's non-attorneys to use LinkedIn is to tell them you want them—and expect them—to be active members. Remind them at staff meetings, discuss it at reviews, and make it a part of team-building activities.

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THE CASE FOR ENCOURAGING NON-ATTORNEYS TO USE LINKEDIN – CONT.

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Including non-attorneys on news or alert emails
Another no-cost way to empower non-attorneys to use LinkedIn is to give them content to post. This is truly as easy as including them on your alert or news emails that already go out to your attorneys. Most firms send legal alerts to their clients and circulate those alerts internally, too. The same goes for firm news. Add your non-attorneys to those emails so they can see what attorneys are writing and what's going on at the firm. Then remind them that they can— and should—post that content on LinkedIn.

Marketing resources
Extend the same marketing resources your firm gives to attorneys to your non-attorneys. If you already have marketing professionals at your firm, it won't be much of a draw on resources to have them help non-attorneys with LinkedIn. This means helping non-attorneys edit their profiles and training them how to use them. We have to show attorneys how to use LinkedIn, and the same goes for non-attorneys. Incorporate it into your staff meetings and professional development schedule.

Shouting them out on the firm page
Most firms post on LinkedIn when a new attorney joins, so why not do the same for a billing clerk or legal assistant? It's simple, and it shows that your firm is hiring good talent. Plus, it can mean a lot to your employees. The same goes for when one of your star non-attorneys wins an award, speaks somewhere, or writes something. Post on your company page about it just as you would for an attorney.

Professional headshots
Getting a professional headshot can be a huge barrier to entry for non-attorneys. This costs a little more than the other ideas on this list, but there are ways to make it less expensive. You don't have to hire a professional photographer every time you hire a new member of support staff. When your photographer comes in to take a photo of a new attorney, offer to take professional photos of your non-attorneys, too. Now your non-attorney has a professional photo to use on LinkedIn, and you don't have to try to find a blurry photo of them from the holiday party to include in the next office newsletter when their 10-year anniversary rolls around. It's a win-win.

Getting your non-attorneys to use LinkedIn isn't a magic bullet for employee engagement, but it's a great way to help your non-attorneys feel cared for and empowered. Their efforts will benefit the rest of the firm and reflect a positive, active, and high-performing culture to the rest of the world.

COMMUNITY SERVICE – COOKIE CART

Our 5th Anniversary celebration "Give me Five!"

with the Cookie Cart Youth Program was a huge success!

We had the Cookie Cart's three goals in mind: *Buy Cookies / Donate / Volunteer*

Give me Five – Volunteer 5 minutes

On Wednesday, October 14th, 2020, we pivoted from our usual annual visit to their Minneapolis location where we would work alongside the youth employees in the bakery to giving a Virtual Presentation. The presentation consisted of several 5-minute segments from our guest Members and Business Partners, with a brief summary of their current career positions and the paths that took them there. Our goal was to inform and inspire the students by showing them a variety of career possibilities and to give encouragement by sharing our personal stories.

Thank-you to our presentation guests:

- Kelly Thaemert – Hellmuth & Johnson
- Jack Duffy – Gallagher Insurance
- Pam Gerards – Merchant & Gould
- Bret Roberts – Presidio
- Sheila Johnson – Minnesota State Bar Assoc.
- Tracy Smith – Smith Gendler law firm

Give me Five – Donate $5

Our second goal was also a bit different from the past years where we requested donations of supplies be brought to the bakery to directly help the youth employees by filling the emergency pantry at the store.

This year we wanted to assist these teens as they shift gears and adapt to continuing their education with Cookie Cart by helping them invest in the technology and infrastructure that creates these opportunities. We asked members to please consider making at least a $5.00 donation to help us help the teens by reaching the first donation goal tier of $350.00.

As of the writing of this article, we have already raised $1,110.00!

Donation Goals:

$10,000 will provide Chromebooks for 50 youth, making virtual Cookie Cart training accessible and equitable

$7,000 will provide 70 youth with the cell phone/hot spot coverage needed for virtual training

$5,500 will support 45 new hires through our Foundation training curriculum

$2,000 will provide 25 youth with home work stations

$1,750 will provide 70 youth with headphones and microphones to work from home with less disruption

$350 will provide 70 youth with necessary office supplies

Thank-you to all of our generous donors (so far):

($100 - $500)

- Kimberly Oleniacz, IST Management Services
- Brittany Hanson, Nelson Worldwide
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($50 – 100)

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- Kelly Thaemert, Hellmuth & Johnson
- Caitlin Niedzwiecki, Foley & Mansfield, PLLP
- Sheila Johnson, MN State Bar Association
- Tracy Overson, Eckland & Blando LLP

and to all the rest of you anonymous & future donors!

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COMMUNITY SERVICE – COOKIE CART – CONTINUED

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To make a donation directly, go to cookiecart.org (& please reference ALA**MN** 10.14.20)

It means a lot! Thank you!

Cookie Cart was started in 1988 by Sister Jean as a safe, secure and engaging space for North Minneapolis's youth. She saw the need to engage the neighborhood's young people in educational and empowering activities.

The bakery teaches essential employment skills; managing their work schedules, taking direction from supervisors, efficient task completion and other problem solving skills. The classroom program includes: customer service training, mock interviews, resume and cover letter writing & financial literacy training.

Watch video here.

To purchase cookies, please go to cookiecart.org

GET TO KNOW YOUR ALA**MN** BOARD

What is one positive thing you have learned during the pandemic?

Kelly Thaemert, President

I have learned that ALA**MN** members like having a virtual option to attend meetings. So many more members have taken advantage of the virtual meetings. It is great to see so many faces on the meetings!

Jessica Gerhardson, Past President

While there have been so many negatives during this pandemic, I think there have been a surprising amount of positives. We've been forced to adapt, and I think we've all realized how incredibly resilient we are. Law firms are known to be slow to change, but I think we've shown that we can pivot and serve clients effectively while working remotely and staying connected – something that would have been unheard of last February!

Caitlin Niedzwiecki, President-Elect

Kids are super smart. When left to their own devices, my 4 and 6-year-old are capable of entertaining and feeding themselves for hours!

Stacy Locsin, Administrative Director

A positive I have undertaken during the pandemic is patience – On days when I don't feel I have accomplished as much as I would like, I have accepted that I'm doing my best every moment of every day, and that's always good enough.

Sarah Duerscherl, Finance Director

I have seen a lot of positives come out of this pandemic and I really try to focus on them when I'm feeling down or overwhelmed. One thing that I have observed is that kids are so accepting of change. My daughters, Evelyn (8) and Nora (4), have taken change and disappointment in stride and shown a resilience that I try my best to emulate at home and at work.

Nick Manty, Membership Director

I've learned to accept the things I can't control.

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