

October / November 2020  
Vol. 2020, No. 5

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"Profitability Accounting  
Methodology for  
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Business Partner  
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#### Editor

Gretchen Luessenheide  
763.443.5139  
[gretchenluessenheide@msn.com](mailto:gretchenluessenheide@msn.com)

#### Advertising

Shelly Losinski  
IntrinXec Management, Inc.  
952.564.3077  
[slosinski@intrinxec.com](mailto:slosinski@intrinxec.com)

### Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor of *the Verdict* are welcome and can be e-mailed to Gretchen Luessenheide at [gretchenluessenheide@msn.com](mailto:gretchenluessenheide@msn.com). In your letter, please include your name, firm name, mailing address, daytime phone number, and e-mail address. Letters that do not contain full contact information cannot be published. Letters typically run 150 words or less and may be edited. Your letter may be on any topic. You will be contacted before your letter is published. Thank you.

## 2020 - 2021 ALAMN OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

### OFFICERS



#### **PRESIDENT**

Kelly Thaumert, CLM  
Hellmuth & Johnson PLLC  
952.746.2170  
[kthaemert@hjlawfirm.com](mailto:kthaemert@hjlawfirm.com)



#### **PAST PRESIDENT**

Jessica Gerhardson  
Greenberg Traurig LLP  
612.259.9734  
[gerhardsonj@gtlaw.com](mailto:gerhardsonj@gtlaw.com)



#### **PRESIDENT-ELECT**

Caitlin C. Niedzwiecki, PHR  
Foley & Mansfield  
612.216.0211  
[cniedzwiecki@foleymansfield.com](mailto:cniedzwiecki@foleymansfield.com)



### DIRECTORS



#### **ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR**

Stacy Locsin  
Patterson Thuente IP  
612-349-5740  
[locsin@ptslaw.com](mailto:locsin@ptslaw.com)



#### **COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR**

Jessica K. Johnson  
Henson & Efron PA  
612.252.2870  
[jjohnson@hensonefron.com](mailto:jjohnson@hensonefron.com)



#### **EDUCATION DIRECTOR**

Kim Pepera  
Eckberg Lammers PC  
651.351.2129  
[kpepera@eckberglammers.com](mailto:kpepera@eckberglammers.com)



#### **FINANCE DIRECTOR**

Sarah Duerschler  
Foley & Mansfield, PLLP  
612-216-0247  
[sduerschlerl@foleymansfield.com](mailto:sduerschlerl@foleymansfield.com)



#### **MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR**

Nick Manty  
Barnes & Thornburg LLP  
612.367.8770  
[nick.manty@btlaw.com](mailto:nick.manty@btlaw.com)

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## ALAMN COMMITTEES & SIGs

**ALAMN COMMITTEES** serve as liaisons between membership and the respective director, representing the **ALAMN** Board of Directors.

### BUSINESS PARTNER RELATIONS

Deb O'Connor 651.332.8315 [deb.oconnor@aj-law.com](mailto:deb.oconnor@aj-law.com)  
Chong Lee 612.204.4633 [clee@fr.com](mailto:clee@fr.com)

### COMMUNICATIONS

Samantha Tschida 612.375.5948 [stschida@arthurchapman.com](mailto:stschida@arthurchapman.com)

### COMMUNITY SERVICE

Pat Stender 952.525.6996 [pstender@cvmlaw.com](mailto:pstender@cvmlaw.com)  
Cheryl Nelson 612.349.0806 [cnelson@robinskaplan.com](mailto:cnelson@robinskaplan.com)

### COMPENSATION & BENEFITS SURVEY

Philip Rush 612.877.5402 [phil.rush@lawmoss.com](mailto:phil.rush@lawmoss.com)  
Karen Davis 612.349.6969 [kdavis@aoblaw.com](mailto:kdavis@aoblaw.com)

### DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Terri Stewart 612.373.8450 [tstewart@felhaber.com](mailto:tstewart@felhaber.com)  
Carlene Holter 612.428.5016 [Carlene.Holter@lewisbristol.com](mailto:Carlene.Holter@lewisbristol.com)

### EDUCATION AND CONFERENCE

Molly Hagen 612.349.8581 [mhagen@robinskaplan.com](mailto:mhagen@robinskaplan.com)  
Carrie Patton 612.604.6626 [cpatton@winthrop.com](mailto:cpatton@winthrop.com)

### HUMAN RESOURCES

Sylvia Mankarious 612.672.3603 [smankarious@messerlikramer.com](mailto:smankarious@messerlikramer.com)  
Stephanie Unterberger 612.672.3260 [stephanie.unterberger@bowmanandbrooke.com](mailto:stephanie.unterberger@bowmanandbrooke.com)

### LARGE FIRM CHIEF OFFICERS

Tracey Skjeveland 612.371.5211 [tskjeveland@merchantgould.com](mailto:tskjeveland@merchantgould.com)

### MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Teresa Reiner 763.225.6022 [teresareiner@gmail.com](mailto:teresareiner@gmail.com)  
Vanessa Kahn 952.885.1294 [vkahn@mmlawfirm.com](mailto:vkahn@mmlawfirm.com)

### SMALL & MEDIUM FIRM

Patti Ploehn 763.843.7215 [pploehn@hennsnoxlaw.com](mailto:pploehn@hennsnoxlaw.com)  
Jeff Downes 952.525.6987 [jeff.downes@cwk-law.com](mailto:jeff.downes@cwk-law.com)

**ALAMN SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs)** are educational forums specific to functional specialty. Special Interest Group (SIG) meeting attendees need not be **ALAMN** members.

### FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Jen Lenander 612.336.6861 [jennifer.lenander@ogletree.com](mailto:jennifer.lenander@ogletree.com)

### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

(TBD)

### PRICING, LEGAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT, & KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

(TBD)

### INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Susan Sutton 612.349.5764 [sutton@ptslaw.com](mailto:sutton@ptslaw.com)  
Val Studer 612.573.2008 [vstuder@dbclaw.com](mailto:vstuder@dbclaw.com)

### ST. CLOUD

Ann Entenmann 320.656.3538 [aentenmann@rinkenoonan.com](mailto:aentenmann@rinkenoonan.com)

## KNOW YOUR LEGAL JARGON

**Per curiam** – Latin for "through the court." A decision delivered by a multi-judge panel, such as an appellate court, in which the decision is said to be authored by the court itself, instead of situations where those individual judges supporting the decision are named.



## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Kelly Thaemert, CLM, ALAMN President



Every morning I listen to the news while I am getting ready for work. Just last week I heard the meteorologist say that fall is here, but none of us had social cues to tell us that it is fall. Think about it...with so many events being cancelled because of COVID-19, all of our days seem to blend together. This year we did not have our Minnesota State Fair. This is usually most people's cue that fall has arrived. Summer is officially over. The family has taken one last vacation, and the kids have gone back to school. This all means it is fall.

At this time of year I have already started my end of year list of tasks to complete: performance reviews, budgets, preparing spreadsheets and documents for the new year, and the list goes on. This can be overwhelming

for a person. Every year I get to this point and think to myself, "How am I ever going to get this all done?" I am sure you can all relate. So, how do you get through it? Do you create lists? (I do!!!) Do you delegate your work? (I am not very good at this.) Do you reach out to ALA and ALAMN communities for answers to your questions? (I do!!!) Do you work even more than you already work? (I do. ☹️) No matter what you do, the work always seems to get done.

This has been a crazy year for so many of us. Be sure to take some time for yourself. Do something you enjoy. Instead of watching the news, or listening to the radio, listen to a good podcast. Go for a walk. Have a bonfire with friends, but be sure to social distance. ☺️ Do whatever makes you happy. And, be thankful, 2020 is almost over!

## COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – SECOND HARVEST HEARTLAND

The Community Services Committee was back in action on August 20, 2020, when several ALAMN members and Business Partners volunteered their time at Second Harvest Heartland to help pack 444 boxes of emergency food rations (which equaled 6,290 meals) to be distributed to those in need.

Thanks to all who participated!

Second Harvest Heartland is a member of Feeding America, a nationwide network of more than 200 food banks that serves every state in the United States. The partnership with Feeding America helps to significantly amplify the organization's impact and reach by providing access to millions of pounds of surplus food and grocery donations. Additional information about Second Harvest Heartland can be found on their website: [www.2harvest.org](http://www.2harvest.org)



The next volunteer event is scheduled at the Cookie Cart on October 14, 2020. Watch the ALAMN News Blasts and website for information.



# ALAMN CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## OCTOBER 2020

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

## NOVEMBER 2020

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

**\*PLEASE NOTE:**  
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (SIG) attendees need not be ALAMN members

### OCTOBER

- 6 HR Committee Meeting**  
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
- 7 Large Firm SIG Meeting**  
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
- 14 Community Service – Mentoring Youth and Baking Help**  
4:00 pm – 6:00 pm
- 20 Facilities SIG Meeting**  
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

### NOVEMBER

- 4 Large Firm SIG Meeting**  
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
- 10 Law Firm Leaders Networking Event**
- 11 Community Service – USAOSA Holiday Cards for Service Members**  
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm  
Patterson Thuente Pedersen
- 17 Facilities SIG Meeting**  
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm



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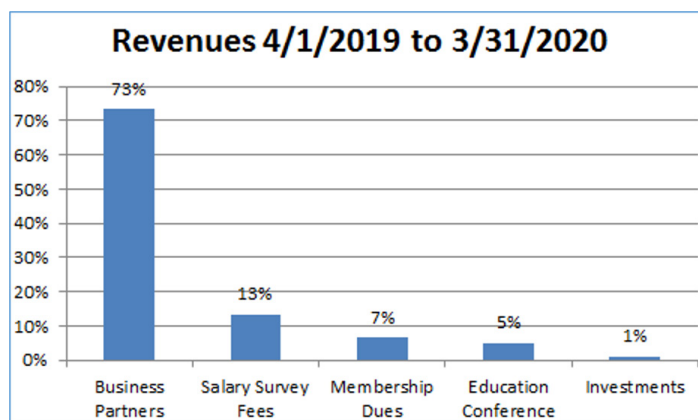


# ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

By Sarah Duerscherl

This report serves as a review of ALAMN's finances for the year ending March 31, 2020. As the Director of Finance for the chapter, one of my roles is processing cash receipts and expenses, as well as preparing monthly financials for the board to review on behalf of the organization. We have a great checks and balances system in place with other board members auditing the transactions that I complete. ALAMN is a non-profit with a fiscal year running from April 1 through March 31. The mission of our local chapter replicates the larger Association of Legal Administrators organization that it belongs to. The mission is big, impressive, and is worth repeating, so here it is: 1. Improve the quality of management in legal services organizations; 2. Promote and enhance the competence and professionalism of legal administrators and all members of the management team; 3. Represent professional legal management and managers to the legal community and to the community at large. To this end, our chapter has focused on providing programs and services benefiting its members to accomplish the Association's mission.

Below is a summary showing where our chapter receives funds and how these funds are used to benefit the members.



## Business Partners

Business Partners provided 73% of our 2019 revenue, which equates to \$144,275.00. They are a large part of the success of our chapter. Currently, we have 44 valuable Business Partners (listed on our website) who sponsor our organization. As a reminder, members are encouraged to consider our Business Partners when making purchasing decisions. If you are using a resource who is not a partner with ALAMN, please educate them on our group and encourage them to join.

## Salary & Benefit Survey

The annual salary survey collects data on law firm salaries and is available for purchase every year. Salaries and benefits are surveyed every few years. The 2019 survey covered salary and benefits information. The survey data is tabulated by an independent third party and circulated to members who participate at a reduced cost and to other members for a fee. This survey generated 13% of our revenue.

## Membership Dues

Dues paid by members provided 7% of the chapter's revenue. As an organization we are always looking to expand our membership, so please keep that in mind if you meet someone in the legal field who is not a member.

## Education Conference

The annual education conference held in February 2020 generated 5% of our revenue.

## Program Costs

55% of the chapter's expenses last year were for program costs. Funds were used for the following programs: Salary Survey, Education Conference, Leadership Event, ALA Webinars, Business Partner Relations Events, and Membership Committees.

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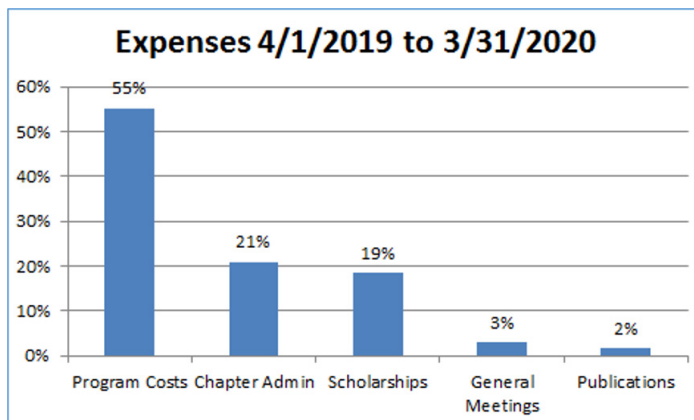


# ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT - CONTINUED

*continued from page 8*

## Scholarships

Annually, ALAMN offers numerous scholarships for its members. Scholarship program funding is based on a percentage of the chapter's projected yearly revenue. Total scholarship expenses made up 19% of our costs. All members have an opportunity to receive a scholarship at various points in the year to be used towards education opportunities at both the local and national levels. Please watch throughout the year for communications on scholarships.



## Chapter Administration

The chapter incurs expenses to run the organization. Expenditures for things such as accounting fees, credit card fees, insurance, communications, graphic design, supplies, and charitable activities are included in this category. Chapter administration totaled 21% of our costs last year.

## General Meetings

Expenses for speaker fees, meals, and related postcards/ mailing made up 3% of the chapter's cost last year.

## Publications

Website maintenance and new banners accounted for 2% of the total costs.

The Association creates a budget each year to ensure the financial stability summarized above. The budget is monitored very closely by the board. ALAMN is meeting its objective to provide programs and services for the benefits of its members while remaining financially stable.

If you have any questions regarding this information please feel free to reach out to Sarah Duerscherl at [sduerscherl@foleymansfield.com](mailto:sduerscherl@foleymansfield.com) for further details.

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# ALAMN MASTER CALENDAR

ALAMN leadership has created a master calendar for 2020. This calendar includes the all-member events and special interest group meetings. Service committee meetings are not included on the master calendar and will continue to be scheduled by service committee chair(s). You will notice fewer events on the ALAMN master calendar. Our goal is to elevate the quality of and attract more attendees to each event.

Be sure to check out the Full Calendar on our ALAMN website for more details about upcoming meetings and events!

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ALAMN Post-Holiday Party</b></li> <li>• Small/Medium</li> <li>• Facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Annual ALAMN Education Conference</b></li> <li>• HR</li> <li>• Finance</li> <li>• Facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>General Meeting 1</b></li> <li>• Facilities</li> <li>• IP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership Orientation</li> <li>• Large Law Firm Chief Officers</li> </ul>
MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large Law Firm Chief Officers</li> <li>• Community Service Event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>General Meeting 2</b></li> <li>• Large Law Firm Chief Officers</li> <li>• Facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ALAMN Summer Social</b></li> <li>• Large Law Firm Chief Officers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>General Meeting 3</b></li> <li>• Large Law Firm Chief Officers</li> </ul>
SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Salary Survey Results</b></li> <li>• Large Law Firm Chief Officers</li> <li>• Community Service Event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ALAMN Fall Social</b></li> <li>• Large Law Firm Chief Officers</li> <li>• Community Service Event</li> <li>• Facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Law Firm Leaders Networking Event</b></li> <li>• Large Law Firm Chief Officers</li> <li>• Community Service Event</li> <li>• Facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilities</li> <li>• Large Law Firm Chief Officers</li> </ul>

## ALAMN 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 HR COMMITTEE – OCTOBER 6, 2020 LIVE SPEAKER (OVER ZOOM)

ALAMN HR Committee / October 6, 2020 Speaker / 12:00 – 1:00 CST  
 Psychologist and Humorist, Bruce Christopher M.A., M.A., LP, CSP  
*(Certified Speaking Professional)*

The HR Committee is excited to announce that we have confirmed Dr. Bruce Christopher to speak at our next scheduled meeting as a ‘give-back’ session, free of charge! We are hoping to have a great showing of HR Committee Member support to thank him for his time and sharing this content with our group!

### STAYING ENERGIZED IN A DRAINING WORLD:

#### The Power of Attitude in Times Like These

*(And...as a bonus...Top Ten Reasons to Not Freak-Out in Today's World)*

The most important thing about you is your attitude. Studies have shown that people with a positive attitude get sick less often, have better relationships, and are more successful in their careers.

Attitude is contagious and helps to create an energized work and home environment. We would all like to have a positive attitude especially in times like these.

Many people today are experiencing an “energy crisis” in their personal and professional lives. The objective of this program is to help individuals take control of their personal energy and re-focus it toward more productive behaviors.

In this humorous session, you will learn the power of a positive attitude and the secrets only OPTIMISTS know; you will discover how attitude creates success, shapes moods, and is contagious.

### PSYCHOLOGIST AND HUMORIST

#### BRUCE CHRISTOPHER

Laugh ‘til you cry. Learn ‘til you change. These are the only rules that apply at a Bruce Christopher presentation. At the heart of it all, what separates Bruce from the pack is his outrageously funny dynamic delivery of today’s hot topics. Bruce inspires audiences internationally by giving them real, immediate solutions for change without fluff and hype.



Bruce has spoken at the prestigious Million Dollar Round Table Conference, London’s Royal College of Surgeons, and the Mayo Clinic. He is a practicing supervising Clinical Psychologist holding degrees in Professional Psychology and Interpersonal Communications. He speaks over 100 times each year and is one of today’s most sought after speakers in the Fortune 500 and at the most prestigious medical and dental conferences.

Please let us know if you have any questions! We look forward to seeing all members of the ALAMN HR Committee at this event!

Log into your ALAMN profile to register now! Register now at: [www.alamn.memberclicks.net/index.php?option=com\\_mcform&view=ngforms&id=2061310#/](http://www.alamn.memberclicks.net/index.php?option=com_mcform&view=ngforms&id=2061310#/)

Sylvia Mankarious  
 HR Committee Co-Chair  
[smankarious@messerlikramer.com](mailto:smankarious@messerlikramer.com)

Steph Unterberger  
 HR Committee Co-Chair  
[stephanie.unterberger@bowmanandbrooke.com](mailto:stephanie.unterberger@bowmanandbrooke.com)

## WHY BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH BUSINESS PARTNERS? LET ME COUNT THE REASONS...

By *Caitlin Niedzwiecki*

Why are the relationships between ALAMN members and business partners so important? There are more reasons than I can count, but here is my list of the top FIVE:

### **#1: Trusted Partners**

I can guarantee that the business partners who sponsor our organization are already doing business with at least one person you know. How great is it that instead of having to blindly select a company when you are in the market for a new bank, coffee service, insurance broker, etc., you can select from a short list of trusted partners who already have established, and in many cases, long-term, relationships with other law firms? And if you are looking for a testimonial from another firm, you can just call up one of your ALAMN friends!

### **#2: Resources**

Business partners are great resources for anything and everything related to their industry. Allow me to provide a couple of illustrations of this point. Say you have an established relationship with one of our BPs for office supplies, and your firm recently decided to order some branded gifts for an upcoming client event. Well, look no further than your office supply company, because chances are they also do branded gifts. Here's another one: Are you in need of a new provider for your employees' health savings accounts? Perhaps the business partner who handles your 401k accounts would be the perfect fit! Business partners can also be great consultants when questions and issues arise at work. If you haven't had a chance yet, be sure to check out the [COVID-19 Resources page](#) on the ALAMN website where you can find pandemic-related resources from many of our business partners.

### **#3: Education**

Another benefit of our relationship with BPs is the education they provide to members! Business partners have a wealth of knowledge in their specialty areas, and they are eager to share this knowledge with us at general meetings, committee meetings, and special interest groups. On the flip side, BPs benefit from the networking and face time with our members during these educational sessions. A win-win for everyone!

### **#4: Friendship**

At the risk of sounding cheesy, I'll admit that my relationships with many of the BPs have grown into more than a business partnership over the years – I consider them to be my friends. These are people I look forward to grabbing coffee or lunch with and people I actively seek out at community service events and socials. Conversation is easy, and we mutually check in with each other not just about the business stuff, but about the personal stuff too.

### **#5: Financial Support**

Our business partner sponsorships make all of the programming we do possible! Everything from the conference scholarships to the local educational opportunities to the numerous socials and networking events are made possible due to the financial commitments of our BPs. And we thank them for it!

I encourage you to give a business partner a call or send them an email today. Even if it's just to catch up. They are truly the backbone of our organization.

## AN OVERVIEW OF “PROFITABILITY ACCOUNTING METHODOLOGY FOR LAW FIRMS”

By Jay Erdman, SurePoint Technologies

Over the years, the term “profitability analysis” has meant different things to different people. For example, some refer to “billing realization” or “collection realization” as the metric for measuring profitability in the law firm environment.

At SurePoint, we believe that law firms should measure profitability utilizing a different and better measurement derived from the traditional “cost accounting” methodology used by the accounting function in the manufacturing world.

In this approach, the cost accountant produces standard “cost models” by allocating the direct labor and overhead costs absorbed to determine the standard cost of producing a product. Based on this analysis, a company can price their products appropriately so that a proper gross margin is realized to meet their overall financial goals.

In the service business, the production of “products” is not so clearly defined and requires a different approach. In a law firm, the “profitability accounting analysis” is a costing methodology that determines the cost of a revenue stream. The analysis computes the series of direct and indirect rates per hour of the timekeeper and allocates those costs to their revenue to measure their gross and net contribution to the firm’s profits.

### What is the process?

To conduct a profitability analysis, you need to consider the following elements.

**First**, you must identify the revenue method you are measuring:

1. Full Accrual is where the revenue is recognized when the time is worked.
2. Modified Accrual is where the revenue is recognized when the time is billed.
3. Cash Basis is where the revenue is recognized when the time is collected.

Each method has pros and cons. Full Accrual and Modified Accrual may never turn into cash due to write-offs or non-payment. However, the client might look profitable under those methods when, in fact, the client has not paid their bills. The management committee will quickly lose faith in the profitability analysis as a useful tool if this occurs. We recommend the Cash Basis revenue method. Under this method, the cash has been received and the profitability measurement answers, “What did it cost us to create that revenue stream?”

**Second**, you must identify the profit you are measuring. For example, is the firm’s profit to be measured:

1. Zero, and all the equity partners' compensation is considered part of their direct cost? Some equity partners will have timekeeper costs greater than their billing rate creating a “loss” for everything they work on.
2. The equity partners' compensation, and none of their compensation is considered part of their direct cost? The equity partners will have no compensation cost and will look very profitable.
3. The amount distributed over the base monthly draws? This is a generally acceptable approach, as the monthly draw is deemed to be the equity partners' compensation.

When a non-equity partner, associate, or paralegal’s direct cost is calculated, their W-2 compensation is the value used for their salary. However, for equity partners, whose compensation includes both their “salary” and a share of the firm’s profits, there is no industry standard for identifying their “direct” cost for delivering legal services. Many firms end up assigning the equity partners a (culturally acceptable) “salary” for their direct cost for being an attorney and then use the difference of their total compensation as the profit to be measured.

[ continued on page 14 ]

## AN OVERVIEW OF “PROFITABILITY ACCOUNTING METHODOLOGY FOR LAW FIRMS”

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**Third**, the direct expenses must be identified for each timekeeper. These typically include salary (see above for equity partners), bonus, taxes, medical, benefits, parking, etc. These are costs that come and go with the timekeeper. This calculation should also include the timekeepers' proportional share of costs attributed to their administrative support (also with their respective direct costs calculated in the same manner).

**Fourth**, you must calculate the indirect costs for each timekeeper. For this calculation, you simply take the total revenue, subtract the net profit to be measured, subtract the allocated direct costs, and the remainder is the indirect costs.

Generally, the pool of indirect costs is allocated to each timekeeper based upon a weighting average that properly distributes the cost as it is perceived to be utilized. For example:

- Partners receive a 100% weighting factor
- Associates receive a 50% to 75% weighting factor
- Paralegals receive a 0% to 33% weighting factor

Each timekeeper is then allocated their indirect cost amount.

The direct and indirect costs are then allocated on an hourly basis by dividing each individual's direct and indirect total costs by their collected hours. The result is the direct rate per timekeeper per hour and the indirect rate per timekeeper per hour.

The steps identified above, and the assumptions made for each must gain acceptance by the user of the analysis (e.g., Management of Finance committee) so that the profitability process and reporting is considered fair and objective.

### Presentation of Profitability Data Points

Depending on the system, your financial management solution you should be able to generate a profitability report with the following elements:

- Collected Hours
- Collected Fees
- Direct Cost Partners
- Direct Cost Non-Partners
- Gross Profit
- Gross Profit %
- Indirect Cost Absorbed
- Net Profit \$
- Net Profit %
- Non-Partner Leverage %
- Revenue Per Hour
- Cost Per Hour
- Difference Per Hour

Additionally, this information should be easily sorted to provide statistics by:

- Originating Attorney
- Billing Attorney
- Responsible Attorney
- Working Attorney
- Client
- Matter
- Area of Law
- Practice Group

This information enables you to analyze the firm's profitability from several perspectives.

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## AN OVERVIEW OF “PROFITABILITY ACCOUNTING METHODOLOGY FOR LAW FIRMS”

*continued from page 14*

### Unlock Higher Performance and Greater Efficiency

Every law firm needs to have a solid understanding of its profitability components:

- Products: The practice areas that are most profitable and which ones need to be re-evaluated
- Clients: The entities who buy the products
- Attorneys: Those who sell, manage, and create the products

Conducting a profitability analysis is an educational process for law firms. Empowered with the information above, your firm can improve its profitability by gaining a better understanding of its revenue streams, cost structures, pricing points, relevant volumes, and profitability logistics. In doing so, you can uncover opportunities to drive growth, efficiencies, and more value for your clients.

### About the Author:

Jay Erdman, CPA, is an Executive Advisor with SurePoint Technologies. He consults with law firms across the country on a range of topics including partner development and financial management issues. He is a frequent speaker at local, regional, and national ALA events.

Jay earned his degree in Accounting and Management from the University of Cincinnati and has over forty years of accounting experience and law firm specialization.

SurePoint Technologies is a pioneer in developing the “Profitability Accounting Methodology for Law Firms.” Jay has conducted more than 100 profitability studies.

## PPP LOAN FORGIVENESS: TAXABLE OR NOT?

*By Scott Hoyles CPA, ABV, MBT and Thomas E Pesch CPA, CMA, of Olsen Thielen Ltd.*

The 2020 year of COVID-19 is like no other in almost a century. The onset of the COVID -19 pandemic created uncertainty and economic peril for many business owners and the employees that are part of those businesses. The US Congress, with the oversight of the Treasury Department, provided an economic safety net to help companies weather the current uncertainty.

As a response, the Small Business Administration (SBA) rolled out the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) as approved by Congress and began accepting applications April 3, 2020. Part of the CARES Act, which authorized SBA to loan out \$349 billion to small businesses, is the PPP loan. In summary, a company is eligible for the PPP loan if it meets the criteria. The Small Business Act defines a small business as a company that has 500 or fewer

employees, and whose principal place of employment is in the United States, with consideration given to its affiliations with other entities.

The first round of initial funding of \$349 billion was exhausted within days of the program launch. Congress authorized the second round of \$310 billion, which opened for processing April 27, 2020. The second round of funding was not exhausted before the August 8 deadline. As much as \$130 billion went unused. Perhaps the funds were not fully utilized due to the fear of an SBA audit, and the small businesses were realizing they may not need the funding as initially anticipated.

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## PPP LOAN FORGIVENESS: TAXABLE OR NOT? - CONTINUED

*continued from page 15*

There were several available loan programs offered to small businesses, including the EIDL loan, the Mainstreet lending program, and grants offered to the small business community. One of the most appealing aspects of the PPP loan is the ability to apply for forgiveness. If the SBA approves the forgiveness application, the loan is not repaid. Therefore, it becomes a grant from the SBA for business operations. Not only is this loan forgiven, but any portion forgiven is also not taxable—a double benefit, as most would think. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) later issued notice 2020-32, which states that any normally deductible expenses paid and used in the application for the forgiveness of the PPP loan cannot be deducted for tax purposes. At first glance, this seems logical—a borrower is provided tax-free funding, but the expenses that it paid are not allowed as tax deductions. However, upon further investigation, this may not be rational.

Congress stated their intent was for the expenses paid by the PPP loan to be deductible, whether the loan was forgiven or not. The bottom line is, if the expenses are not deductible, the PPP loan forgiveness becomes taxable. Let's consider an example.

- A borrower with \$100 of income and \$50 of expenses would normally have \$50 of taxable income (\$100 of income - \$50 of expenses).
- Now add a \$10 PPP loan that is forgiven. If the forgiveness (COD) is not excluded from income, the borrower would have \$60 of taxable income (\$100+\$10 (COD) of revenue - \$50 of expenses).
- With the exclusion of COD income and disallowance of expenses, the borrower would have the same \$60 of taxable income (\$100 of revenue - \$40 (\$50-\$10 of expenses paid with PPP loan)).
- This seems to prove that the forgiven PPP loan is still taxable even though excluded from income.

Congress is still working through more options to help the economic condition of small businesses. As a part of any package, there is the opportunity to change the non-deductibility of expenses paid with forgiven PPP loan funds. The IRS's position represents a tax cost to borrowers of about \$100 billion and brings with it complications to tax credit calculations and calculations of deductions based on payroll.

No matter how you stand on the issue, the ruling remains—the portion of the PPP loan forgiven is not taxable, and the expenses paid with the forgiven part of the loan are not tax-deductible.

### **About the Author:**

Scott Hoyles CPA, ABV, MBT and Thomas E Pesch CPA, CMA are both shareholders of Olsen Thielen Ltd, a Twin Cities CPA firm with a dedicated professional services group serving law firms and law firm professionals. They can be reached at [Shoyles@otcpas.com](mailto:Shoyles@otcpas.com) and [Tpesch@otcpas.com](mailto:Tpesch@otcpas.com)

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## BUSINESS PARTNER SPOTLIGHT - SARA AUSMAN OF ALERUS



**Let's talk about the company you work for first. What do you want us to know about Alerus? Any cool, interesting facts?**

Our company name – Alerus – stems from a Latin word which can be interpreted as “to take flight.” The name illustrates our company’s rise from a traditional bank to the diversified financial services company we are today.

Alerus’s roots run deep - going back to 1897 – so we have a long and significant history of growth and perseverance, qualities which are crucial in our current environment. Notably, our company survived total destruction when a 100-year flood event struck Grand Forks, North Dakota, in 1997. Our headquarters and records buildings were flooded and then burned in an uncontrollable fire, and nearly all of our employees were displaced for months. The company literally rose from the ashes of that devastating event and grew to the multibillion-dollar, full financial service organization we are today. We entered the Twin Cities just over a decade ago and have grown it into the largest market of our entire footprint, with nearly 450 employees throughout the Twin Cities.

The lessons we learned during that once-in-a-lifetime crisis helped shape who we are and have guided our response during the pandemic. Above all, we cherish our employees and clients, and we always do what’s right for them.

**What is your role at Alerus?**

As a regional president, I am responsible for strategic planning, business planning, and driving initiatives to strengthen Alerus’s reach in the Twin Cities. I also lead our charitable giving efforts in the area and personally serve customers in commercial banking, private banking, retirement plan administration, and wealth management.

**How long have you been involved with ALAMN?**

Over 25 years.

**What is your favorite TV show of the summer?**

Shark Tank.

**What is the last vacation you took?**

My family and I were fortunate to take a weeklong trip to Ireland in late February – just before travel bans were implemented.

**What is your favorite weekend activity?**

Spending time with family, taking walks with our dog.

**What is your favorite way to pass 30 minutes of free time?**

Reading.

**If you could learn to do anything, what would it be?**

Hone my knitting skills.

**At what age did you become an adult (in your opinion)?**

18 – When I left home to attend out-of-state college at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I was the first in my family to attend school outside of our hometown in the Chicago area.

## BUSINESS PARTNER SPOTLIGHT - DAN HERMAN OF FLUID INTERIORS



### Let's talk about the company you work for first. What do you want us to know about Fluid Interiors? Any cool, interesting facts?

Fluid works to create spaces that attract. We provide office furniture and do relocations/moves for companies. One fun thing about Fluid is our Studio once housed a restaurant. On some of the brick in our space, you can still see marks where there was a flare up from the stove top. We have also kept some of the restaurant persona, as some of our areas have been named after how the location in our Studio was used for the restaurant. One other way we kept the persona as our goal with our guests visiting is that they feel as though they have been served during their visit.

### What is your role at Fluid?

My role at Fluid is to assist companies bridge the gap between their needs and Fluid's capabilities. I look and find the opportunities for Fluid to flourish. Additionally I look to educate on trends in offices.

### How long have you been involved with ALAMN?

Oh, man...I think 6 or 7 years.

### What is your favorite TV show of the summer?

I have not watched too much, been trying to get outside as much as possible. Early pandemic I watched a documentary about how the McDonald's Monopoly game was rigged for about a decade. Not by anyone at McDonald's, but by an individual at the company that ran the game.

### What is the last vacation you took?

Our family took a short trip to Iowa to take in two Indy Racecar races, socially distant. It was fun and great to get away. During this trip we had a quick trip to Pella, IA, which is a nice town to visit and explore a bit.

### What is your favorite weekend activity?

Our family has created a summer bucket list, so checking something off that list. Make homemade lemonade, PJ day, go fishing, sit by a fire, stay up late and watch a movie are a few of the items.

### What is your favorite way to pass 30 minutes of free time?

This summer it has been to go for a drive, take a walk in some different locations, or a bike ride.

### If you could learn to do anything, what would it be?

There is kind of a long list. But one item is that I would like to learn to surf, which is a little hard in the great state of MN.

### At what age did you become an adult (in your opinion)?

Well my wife claims that I have not reached that point. Often when there is loudness in the house she exclaims, "Kids, knock it off," with me being one of the three that needs to knock it off.



## BUSINESS PARTNER SPOTLIGHT - GREG EASTIN OF LOFFLER



**Let's talk about the company you work for first. What do you want us to know about Loffler? Any cool, interesting facts?**

Loffler is a great family-owned business. I absolutely love how much the entire Loffler family cares about our customers, employees, and the communities we serve.

**What is your role at Loffler?**

Strategic Account Executive – Dan Leavitt and I work together leading our focus on Legal Solutions.

**How long have you been involved with ALAMN?**

Around 19 years.

**What is your favorite TV show of the summer?**

Maine Cabin Masters.

**What is the last vacation you took?**

Just took two weeks off to build a cabin.

**What is your favorite weekend activity?**

Going to the lake!

**What is your favorite way to pass 30 minutes of free time?**

A walk with my family and our dog Lambeau.

**If you could learn to do anything, what would it be?**

To be a better basketball coach for all personality types of kids. Some kids are easy to coach. I wish I had more knowledge on how to coach the best out of all kids.

**At what age did you become an adult (in your opinion)?**

I thought I knew it all at 18 and for sure in my 20/30's, but in reality I am still trying to figure things out in my late 40's.... There are lessons to be learned every day!

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## BUSINESS PARTNER SPOTLIGHT - JESSICA JOYCE OF ROBERT HALF LEGAL



### Let's talk about the company you work for first. What do you want us to know about Robert Half Legal? Any cool, interesting facts?

Robert Half Legal is a full service staffing and consulting firm. We have solutions for any number of problems that face firms on a daily basis. We can help find and secure talent from Partner-level attorney to mail clerk and everyone in-between. We are experts in creating efficient, thorough hiring processes that save time and improve results!

Our bread and butter is staffing on permanent and temporary bases, but we are also a consulting firm. We are a provider of eDiscovery services, including data processing and hosting, and we have Subject Matter Experts that can help create solutions for contract management, legal compliance, data management, information governance, data privacy, M&A, and transactions.

### What is your role at Robert Half?

I am the Division Director of our Permanent Placement Team. I focus exclusively on working with law firm and corporate legal department clients to fill their open positions. My team focuses on a pro-active recruiting approach, constantly meeting with new and passive legal talent to retain a "matrix" of candidates for our most requested functional roles.

### How long have you been involved with ALAMN?

I have been involved in one way or another with ALAMN for about 4 years. When I began working with Robert Half Legal, I started going to Community Service Events. As my relationships with many ALAMN members have grown, so has my association with your group!

### What is your favorite TV show of the summer?

This summer my husband and I are catching up on Yellowstone. We're almost through Season 2...so NO

SPOILERS! Since that's very intense, I also love to watch the re-vamped *Queer Eye* by myself!

### What is the last vacation you took?

I love and miss vacation!! Ha ha! However, I was lucky to squeeze in a short trip before lockdown went into effect. We're big baseball fans in my house and were able to make it to Ft Myers, FL, for Spring Training this year. A bucket list item for my husband. We made it to one game before they cancelled MLB. I guess that means it's probably only partially crossed of that bucket list!

### What is your favorite weekend activity?

In normal times, it's visiting and being visited by family and friends. I'm from Iowa, and my entire (large) family lives there still. So we spend a lot of weekends catching up with family ... or we used to. However, I've really been enjoying Minneapolis this summer! We've been spending time in outdoor spaces, and it's been lovely!

### If you could learn to do anything, what would it be?

Sailing! I have ALWAYS wanted to learn to sail a sailboat. I realize that this is not an impossible goal, but I've just never taken the time or opportunity.

### At what age did you become an adult (in your opinion)?

I kind of feel like I really became an adult ... a real adult ... this year, so 34. In January, I found out that I was pregnant, in March a pandemic hit us locally, in May civil unrest broke loose in Minneapolis, in June my husband and I purchased a new home (my first), in October I'll become a parent (for the first time). The amount of consequential decisions to consider, learning to do, and listening I've done this year definitely beats all the others of my life combined!



## BUSINESS PARTNER SPOTLIGHT - DEB BUSCH OF USI INSURANCE SERVICES



**Let's talk about the company you work for first. What do you want us to know about USI? Any cool, interesting facts?**

USI is a proud business partner of ALAMN. We are in the business of helping clients manage risk with appropriate insurance policies and attract and retain employees with robust employee benefit and retirement programs. USI is the 2nd largest insurance broker with over 8,000 employees in over 220 offices nationwide. USI's most meaningful distinction is our USI ONE Advantage®, which integrates proprietary analytical tools with a national network of highly consultative, closely-linked professionals and technical resources to deliver local, knowledgeable, hands-on service and ongoing expertise and support. This powerful combination yields a robust set of fundamentally different benefit solutions with superior results—including meaningful bottom line financial impact—for our clients.

USI has been extra busy during the COVID-19 pandemic developing other useful tools and resources. Feel free to check these out at your firms: USI:Steer [www.usi.com/public-health-emergencies/](http://www.usi.com/public-health-emergencies/) (helping companies prepare and respond to public health emergencies) and USI Z(ONE) [www.usi.com/covidzonetool/](http://www.usi.com/covidzonetool/) (a real-time, digital COVID-19 risk assessment & navigation tool designed to help organizations make more informed operational and workforce decisions).

### **What is your role at USI?**

I am responsible for bringing on new clients and ensuring my clients are well taken care of by their service teams.

### **How long have you been involved with ALAMN?**

I have been a business partner with ALAMN for the past six years and enjoy all the fun volunteer opportunities and networking events.

### **What is your favorite TV show of the summer?**

Right now I'm on Season 3 of Billions with Paul Giamatti and Damian Lewis. I typically don't watch much TV during the summer months, however, COVID-19 changed that this summer.

### **What is the last vacation you took?**

My husband and I were booked for a two-week vacation to Italy in May to celebrate our 35th wedding anniversary. However, that trip was postponed, so very last minute we booked a COVID-safe family vacation at Edgewild Resort near the Cross Lake area and did some golfing, fishing, and hanging out with my two grandsons.

### **What is your favorite weekend activity?**

I love the outdoors so walking, biking, fishing, paddle boarding, and golfing are top choices.

### **If you could learn to do anything, what would it be?**

Playing piano. I started taking lessons in my 30's, but with a busy family life and working, I never continued it.

### **At what age did you become an adult (in your opinion)?**

I'd say at age 20, as that's when I got married (very young) and built our first home. Nothing like taking on a mortgage and other bills to pay to make you grow up quickly!



## ALAMN BUSINESS PARTNER COVID RESOURCES

Looking for a good COVID Resource? ALAMN has created a page on its website for all COVID-related information. Follow this link [www.alamn.memberclicks.net/covid-19-resources-menu](http://www.alamn.memberclicks.net/covid-19-resources-menu) to access Business Partner and ALA-provided information related to the virus and pandemic.

If you have information that you would like to see added to our resource page, you may send the information to Deb O'Connor at [deb.oconnor@aj-law.com](mailto:deb.oconnor@aj-law.com).

### ALAMN IS ON SOCIAL MEDIA



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## GET TO KNOW YOUR ALAMN BOARD

### What was your first paying job?

#### **Kelly Thaemert, President**

My very first job was babysitting. I was probably 12 or 13, and I mostly babysat for my cousin. I was paid \$0.50 per hour. When I was 15 I started waitressing at a local café, and I was paid around \$4 per hour plus tips. I would work 9 or 10 hours every Saturday, and I usually made around \$25 in tips.

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#### **Caitlin Niedzwiecki, President-Elect**

I had a regular babysitting gig when I was 13. I babysat my church youth group leader's 6-month-old son on Tuesdays and Thursdays after school. I don't remember how much I got paid but I'm sure it wasn't much!

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#### **Stacy Locsin, Administrative Director**

My parents were the owners of a manufacturing plant during my childhood. As a part of the facility operations my siblings and I were paid for a simple task - collecting used/tossed aluminum cans from the break rooms and business office. After ensuring each can placed in the recycle bins was empty, we would crush them, place them in large trash bags and store them away for future delivery to a recycling center. Our financial success depended upon how many bags of cans we amassed (and the going rate paid for aluminum). Rarely was our payment enough money to purchase expensive things, but as a young child it felt very rewarding to have earned my own dollars. Particularly so when, on reflection, acknowledging we made that money out of items that, if not recycled, would have simply been added to the trash. My parents were environmentalists before it was cool!

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#### **Jessica Johnson, Communications Director**

My first job was receptionist in a hair salon when I was 15.

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#### **Kim Pepera, Education Director**

My first job was a paper route when I was 12 years old. I used to deliver to several apartment buildings, which was very lucrative. My Mom would drop me off before school and I'd run through the hallways dropping off the papers.

---

#### **Sarah Duerscherl, Finance Director**

My first paying job was giving our neighbor's dog a bath once a week when I was in 6th grade. It was a little white dog who loved to dig in the backyard, so he was always filthy, and the neighbor was elderly and couldn't do it by herself. I loved dogs, and she paid pretty well, so I remember it being a pretty good gig.

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#### **Nick Manty, Membership Director**

I was 15, and I was a "salad shaker" making salads and shakes at a local diner.

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