



LMA Chapters Connect and Share Their Stories

Gestalt psychologists maintain that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Often the Gestalts liken this statement to the scenarios that occur in supply-chain processes. When one part of the supply chain is missing or disrupted, it can affect the entire process.

Associations such as the Legal Marketing Association don't fit the mentality as the Gestalts wrote it. Instead, LMA more closely ascribes to the statement that the whole is only as good as the sum of its parts. Without its chapters and city groups, LMA would not have as broad a reach and connection with its members, as it cannot be able to be everywhere at once.

LMA's 18 chapters span the United States and two territories in Canada. LMA's chapters host regular local meetings and larger events as well that include keynote speakers and sometimes legal service provider presentations.

As a way of recognizing the chapters and their accomplishments, LMA *Strategies* is dedicating this issue to them. The following pages carry brief articles on chapters' biggest issues, challenges and successes in 2009-10. Each article relates directly to the realities of a particular region that will likely resonate with legal marketing peers across the continent.

LMA's goal is to provide a vehicle that will introduce its chapters' greatest opportunities, lessons learned and challenges to the larger LMA community. This issue works to jumpstart attendee networking activities at the Denver LMA Annual Conference as well as to further connect members and chapters through shared best practices ideas.

For readers interested in learning more about the individual chapters and how to get involved, visit www.legalmarketing.org and click on the "Chapters" link at the top of the page.

Fiscal Responsibility

By Nancy Hoffman, Chapter President

One of our biggest accomplishments to date has been our continuous efforts (with significant successes!) to become fiscally responsible and financially independent. In the years prior to 2009, our chapter relied heavily upon the space and amenities provided by the law firms hosting our events. Beginning in 2009, we moved away from the law firm sponsored events in order to allow more members to attend our programs.

During the past 14 months, led by then President Jamie Mulholland, we decided to change the way that we planned and executed our events. We began to host the chapter programs at public venues. We started tracking the net income (or net loss) of each event. Now, we produce pre-event budgets and attempt to abide by these financials in order to determine whether the event will break even make a profit or a loss. We hold our attendees responsible for showing up and contributing; we also account for their absence. We instituted clearly identified policies that hold individuals who register for an event—but do not attend—responsible for paying for the seat that we reserved for them. Our chapter no longer takes a loss on “no shows.” Since then, we continuously and specifically monitor program fee collections, returns on investments and the values of our sponsorships.

Around the same time that we implemented these new policies, we made a commitment to providing our membership events with consistently progressive and viable educational programming in order to continue to draw program attendees. In 2009 and again this year, we invested significant resources into identifying, planning and delivering insightful and topical educational programs that are highly relevant to our membership. We now plan our programming up to six months prior to January, allowing us to better execute and deliver exceptional programming. This approach also allows us to get appropriate PR for each event while simultaneously maximizing the exposure for our speakers and program presenters.

In sum, the LMA MPC has become responsible for our financial expenditures. Yes, this concept is simple in theory, but it was a massive undertaking for our chapter’s leadership that took significant efforts to implement. Our emphasis is now far more strategic. We have procedures and systems of checks and balances that keep the organization running like a well-oiled machine.

MIDWEST

“It’s the Economy, Stupid!”

By Jennifer Morrison, Chapter President

Did Mr. Carville repeat his famous line at last year’s LMA conference? Like many of us, I missed the conference due to a tight budget. In any case, I think it’s safe to say the economy was everyone’s biggest challenge this year. It certainly was for the LMA Midwest Chapter.

We started 2009 full speed ahead with more than 100 attendees at each of our first two educational programs. And it went downhill from there. As the year progressed more and more marketers lost their jobs, and we saw much smaller numbers at monthly programs. Professional education budgets shrunk and marketers everywhere were trying to do more work with fewer resources.

The leadership of the Midwest Chapter responded by making reinvestment in its members one of its strategic priorities. We had been saving for a rainy day and that day was here.

Our first step was to issue a “Golden Ticket” to each member (our apologies to Willy Wonka). This ticket entitled the holder to complimentary attendance at one of our monthly educational programs. We received great feedback on the Golden Tickets. But what we were even more pleased to

see was that many members were giving away their tickets to colleagues who had lost their jobs. This was a true testament to the support system that is LMA.

Additionally, we ramped up the number of free programming and networking opportunities the chapter provided as member-only benefits. We continued our successful Brown Bag programs and focused some of the topics on careers-in-transition. Brown Bag participants meet at rotating law firms for roundtable-type discussions, bringing their own lunches. We cap attendance at 20 participants to ensure a more intimate conversation.

The Midwest Chapter also launched its first two Shared Interest Groups (SIGs). The Solo Marketers SIG and the Technology SIG each hosted its initial kick-off meetings in the fall. The SIGs offer members a chance to get together with colleagues who have similar job responsibilities for informal networking. We hope to launch at least two more in 2010.

As we head into 2010, we will continue to make reinvesting in our members a top priority while ensuring we have the financial stability to do so.