A Fresh Eye to Legal Conferences

With the 2017 ABA TECHSHOW next week, we thought it was time to look at legal conferences as a whole. As you schedule your calendar for the coming year, are conferences and conventions included in your plans? While many attorneys see these events as valuable opportunities, others attend them begrudgingly without taking advantage of what these events have to offer. With some planning and a different perspective, you can walk away from these conferences with new resources, more knowledge and (dare I say) more clients.

Choosing wisely

From the American Bar Association… to state bars… to the many local level associations, there is no shortage of legal conferences and conventions to consider. Don't feel the need to attend every gathering under the sun. Put some time and consideration into making a wise choice. Do this by first determining what your overall goals are for attendance. If education is your objective, what is it you want to learn? Perhaps you are looking to add a new practice area to your firm and want to bone up on your knowledge. Maybe you are interested in exploring the latest court cases in a practice area your firm already offers. Whatever the goal, identify events that will help you reach it. The ABA maintains an events calendar with a listing of upcoming conferences. Review it regularly to ensure you are up to date on what's available.

Networking, Networking, Networking

Legal conferences offer an excellent opportunity for new connections and networking. In addition to meeting other attendees, you can also take the

opportunity to communicate with the conference organizers and presenters. These individuals are seen as experts in their respective fields. These events offer an opportunity to spend some valuable time with them. Have drink with the featured speaker or invite one of the breakout leaders to dinner. Also, don't just limit your participation to the professional activities. Take a step outside your comfort zone by attending one of the social offerings as well. The laid-back environment is great for getting to know a new contact or client.

The Follow Up

The benefits don't end when the conference comes to an end. A Forbes magazine article offers some valuable tips for nailing a perfect follow-up. The first step is the friendly email. This short message just says that you enjoyed meeting and invites future communication. Next, send a LinkedIn connection. It's best to do this soon after conference, before the contact's memory has time to fade. In the following weeks, think about ways you can provide value to your new contact. Was there a mention a specific need or questions about one of your practice areas? See this as the doorway to a new meeting. Contact the contact and offer to discuss the matter over lunch. If the invitation is accepted… Congratulations. You successfully transformed this one-time meeting into an ongoing professional relationship.

Don't overlook the value of legal conferences and conventions. Make a game plan and det some goals to get the most out of these events and walk away with some beneficial resources.

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a Virginia based writer with a passion for all things legal. As a former domestic relations attorney, she understands the challenge of determining the best fee structure for your practice. Erika is a regular contributor to TimeSolv and a variety of other publications.