

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Eat Lunch!

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PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF NEVADA

**I recently met 10 attorneys who were accepted into the State Bar of Nevada's Handle|Bar Program. Handle|Bar is a state bar-provided benefit that helps practitioners who are setting up their own law practices. This diverse group of practitioners was made up of some attorneys who had just become licensed in Nevada, some who were just going out on their own, and some who had practiced for a while and were seeking a reboot. When asked if there was any practice advice I could offer (honestly, a lawyer being asked to give advice is like catnip to a cat), I found that my advice coincided with the theme for this month's edition – hospitality.**

The best advice I have for any attorney who needs to develop business can be summed up in two words – Eat lunch.

There is a business book entitled “Never Eat Alone: and other secrets to success, One Relationship at a time.” I haven't read it, but I agree with the title. When I decided to leave my first firm, I didn't have a book of business. But as I've noted in prior President Messages,



I am a list maker. I made a list of every person I had ever done work for; every industry I needed to do my work; and every high school, college, and law school chum that lived in the area. Then I went to lunch with them.

I perfected these phrases:

Did you know today is take your banker to lunch day?

Did you know today is take your accountant to lunch day?

Did you know today is take your insurance agent to lunch day?

Did you know today is take my friend Susan's mom's sister's cousin to lunch today?

I did this for six weeks solid, and yes, I paid. I didn't raise the topic of work at the lunch. I just had conversation and a good meal. About three weeks into my lunch-athon, the phone began to ring. I've never wanted for business since ... and I still eat lunch.

Why does this work? Because hospitality is about relationships, and relationships lead to business. The search for an attorney may start with googling or visiting one of the

lawyer referral sites, but the deal gets closed when a trusted advisor confirms that the attorney identified by the referral site is a good person to seek legal help from. When an email is sent around the office or firm asking for an attorney referral in another practice area or location, it is relationships that generate responses along the lines of “I worked with/am friends with/have received referrals from Sally Jones of Smith and Jones, and if she can't help you, the firm can find you a good referral to someone who can.”

There are, of course, those folk who don't like to eat lunch, but almost all of them will make time for a cup of coffee or a late afternoon beverage. The object of the invitation is to find time to get to know the person and start, strengthen, or refresh the relationship.

Nevada is still a small state, and a small thing like a lunch is like tossing a pebble into a still lake ... that pebble generates large ripples in the lake. One lunch can lead to close relationships with judges, chief executive officers of companies, and heads of agencies, all of which leads to business.

Investing the same time in this effort as you do creating the perfect pleading, contract, or email will, I believe, cause business to find you. I also believe it will enrich your practice and your life. For me, there is nothing that reinforces how important it is to connect with others than to be eating lunch with my banker, accountant, insurance agent, or my friend Susan's mom's sister's cousin and having a Nevada Supreme Court justice stop by and say “Hi, Ann, how are you doing? How's the family?”

I love practicing law in Nevada. You will, too, if you just “eat lunch.”