

Volume XII - Issue 4

## ALA MISSION

The Association of  
Legal Administrators'  
mission is to:

Promote and enhance  
the competence and  
professionalism of all  
members of the legal  
management team;

Improve the quality of  
management in law firms  
and other legal service  
organizations; and

Represent professional  
legal management and  
managers to the legal  
community and to the  
community at large.

## Reflections from the ALA Regional Conference

***One of the benefits of ALA chapter membership is the opportunity to attend an educational conference on scholarship. This fall, the chapter presented seven members with scholarships to the Regional Conference in Atlanta. If you are interested in applying for a scholarship, please download an application or talk to a chapter board member.***

### NADEAN STONE

I arrived in America in May 1990 from Trinidad in the West Indies. After working with two major companies that restructured, one of which shifted my position to Elizabeth New Jersey, I thought that working for a law firm might be more stable. In December 1992, I accepted a position as Office Manager at Gunther & Whitaker in Ft. Lauderdale. It was a small insurance defense firm and my first introduction to law firm management.

Twenty years ago fax machines were an integral feature in office equipment and the internet was in its infancy, remember "Al Gore and the Internet Super Highway!" In short shift I met Tami Cooper who was working with Equitrac & Tim Curtis who had started Black's. Both were vendor partners and quickly we became great friends.



Little did I realize how often law firms merge, partnerships explode, entire offices mutiny and join other law firms! I could write a book! However, the one constant throughout my career has been the ALA. When my firm was disintegrating, ALA's network of wonderful members and vendor partners from West Palm Beach to Miami encouraged me and helped me find other positions. Tami Cooper followed my progress from firm to firm and helped me procure a position in West Palm Beach in 1997.

As I reflect on the past twenty years I am so very grateful to ALA and the legal industry which has challenged and educated me in my chosen profession, helped me grow in my career and supported me throughout. I have had exposure to highly



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

[Lisa Dasher, CPA, CLM](#)

Wicker, Smith, O'Hara, McCoy & Ford

Leadership has been described as a process of social influence where one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task. While being a leader can be defined many different ways, a key aspect of leadership is that an individual doesn't necessarily need to have formal authority to ultimately be a leader. Many of us know the differences between a manager and a leader and we have worked with both types of individuals during our careers.

Leaders are people that have the ability to inspire and motivate those individuals who work for them rather than just manage the process. Your ability to develop your leadership skills is integral to your success. While many individuals have the ability to plan, organize and coordinate tasks, not everyone can or will be a leader.

One of ALA's goals is leadership development. ALA presents many educational opportunities for members to enhance their leadership skills through both conferences and webinars. The emphasis on leadership skills can be seen at educational programs throughout our organization. Additionally, the structure of our organization also allows individuals to develop their leadership skills through participation in both our chapter, regional and international organization.

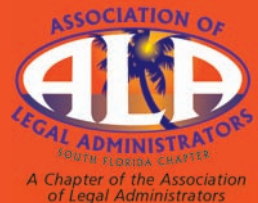
I know that my involvement in ALA has allowed me to continue to hone my

leadership skills during my career. My willingness to participate on a committee or the board has enhanced my confidence, experience and communication skills. Each person that is contributing to our chapter is a volunteer. These individuals volunteer their time and efforts to help develop programs and events for our members.

During the last few weeks the Board has reached out to our membership seeking volunteers for various positions in our chapter. Some people may think that they don't have the background, skills or time to take on an additional responsibility. Rather than immediately react with the thought you can't do it; remember that it may be this opportunity that allows you to grow and develop additional leadership skills.

If you have any interest, even if ever so slightly, reach out to a Board member to discuss the requirements and commitment of their time and resources. I think you will be surprised at how quickly you can contribute to our chapter. I truly believe that the more you give, the more you receive in return. The returns I have personally received in the form of friendships and networking has far outweighed any moment of time I have contributed to our chapter.

Happy New Year!



## FROM THE EDITOR

Gary Smith

Richard and Richard, P.A.

### BUSINESS PARTNERS AND THE LITTLE RED HEN

Every year you see articles espousing the importance of our chapter's business partners. The articles probably says things like "without the financial support of our business partners, professional support to our chapter members would suffer" or "business partners underwrite a portion of many of our chapter events and services."

So rather than restating the importance of supporting our business partners, I thought I would remind you of the tale of The Little Red Hen. In the tale, The Little Red Hen asks for help planting wheat and eventually baking bread. The other farm animals refuse to help. When the bread is done, she asks who will help her eat the bread. This time, the other farm animals eagerly volunteer. The Hen responds "No, you won't." The moral of this story is that those who show no willingness to contribute to an end product do not

deserve to enjoy the end product.

So please, give our partners opportunities to compete for your business. They are invested in our chapter and "willing to help." To quote one of our business partners, Tami Cooper (Co-pitrack), "Supporting the ALA over the past 20+ years has been the key to my success. The members appreciate our commitment to the chapter, and the partnership has enabled me to have many wonderful opportunities on both a professional & personal level."



**2012  
RACE  
FOR  
THE CURE**



Continued from page 1 >

qualified, intelligent and inspiring presenters at monthly luncheons and Annual Conferences.

At the annual conference in Orlando in May 2011 I was introduced to Edna Rosen who had just taken the CLM. Although still reeling from the experience she quickly suggested that I study for it and offered to help in any way she could. I took the exam in September 2011 and became ALASOFLA's 10th member to achieve the CLM.

In September 2012, I attended my first Regional Conference in Atlanta, courtesy of ALASOFLA via a partial scholarship for my work as Publicity Chair Person. My first Annual Conference in 1997 where attendance was in the thousands and sessions in the hundreds was initially overwhelming! I found the regional to be smaller and the

group settings more intimate. The city, hotel and trade show vendor area were all great venues for this event. I had taken the CLM exam in this very hotel one year before!

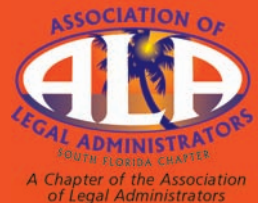
Many of the classes offered satisfied the CLM recertification requirements which are important to me. I met up with Tami Cooper again, surprise, which is always fun and reconnected with Cheramie Burgess, the wife of an attorney from my Gunther & Whitaker days. Cheramie was a young bride when we met in the early nineties. She has since joined ALASOFLA and is legal administrator of her husband's firm in Ft. Lauderdale. We had not seen each other since 1996. I had come full circle! This is what ALA is all about. Education, networking, and great lasting friendships developed over the years!

### SUSAN BUTLER

Once again it was my pleasure to attend a Region 2 Conference. I find that when I attend these conferences we are exposed to a wealth of information, new technology and ideas from our peers. I'm glad to report I was not disappointed. Here is a brief overview of some of the sessions I attended:

"Leveraging the Power of Outlook" presented by Debbie Foster with Affinity Consulting Group: There

have been many changes to Outlook with the 2010 version which will assist us in effectively dealing with the bombardment of email we receive daily. She likened receiving an email and having to respond immediately with an example of a client delivering a letter to us by barging into our office and expecting our immediate attention. In many ways I agree. How can we possibly concentrate on the tasks at hand with constant interruptions? Outlook 2010 will allow us to better organize



our email and set rules for how we want them delivered. This could be especially helpful now that firms are required to participate in E-Service.

“The Art of the Deal – Effective Use of Negotiation Skills” presented by Barry J. Elms, the President of Strategic Negotiations International: According to Mr. Elms there are 7 keys to negotiating like a pro. You will need the information about the topic, credibility, be in control of the location, use your personality to influence others, know the rewards or consequences and have authority to complete the deal. At the conclusion of the session Barry gave us a quiz so we may know what our level of expertise was in negotiating. Many scored over 70%. Considering that we are constantly negotiating not only with vendors but our staff and partners, I found that most of us are much better at negotiating than we give ourselves credit for.

“Business Development Trends You Can Take to the Bank” presented by Deborah McMurray, CEO of Content Pilot, LLC, a marketing and technology company: Ms. McMurray reported that most firms saw a nice rebound from the recession in 2010 but that 2011 resulted in flat demand for legal services. Clients are more reserved in seeking legal counsel and many corporate legal departments are holding the matters in-house for longer periods of time. Procurement departments have more to say in the hiring of attorneys/firms and their goal is the bottom line. Firms have done the urgent things necessary to support firm profitability in the short term, but it's time to realize the playing field is changing. There are younger decision makers and more of them are women. We need to appeal to the new client base and they are “into” technology.

Our websites need to grab their attention and our firms need to be up-to-date with providing what our clients are requesting.

I found the conference satisfied my need for CLM credits and my desire to exchange ideas with my peers.

## NICOLE PENNY

I had the opportunity to take part in an ALA conference for the very first time this year in Atlanta, Georgia. I wasn't sure what to expect from my first conference. I was overwhelmed at first by the people and the experience as a whole. In the end, however, I have to say that my experience was one of the most rewarding and informative that I have had during my ALA membership. I truly hope that the recount of my first time experience will encourage someone else to take that first step towards conference attendance. The Atlanta ALA Regional Conference held education, friendships and fun for me. I can only hope that my future ALA experiences can live up to this one.

At first glance, the conference was very overwhelming. I sat in my room on the first afternoon pouring over different pieces of information and invitations that I had received at my registration. I quickly decided on my education courses, since the main reason I attended was to meet CLM requirements. Deciding wasn't very easy since I was very eager to attend almost all of the seminars. I was pleasantly sur-



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## 8 INTEGRATING KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTIONS

prised by the caliber of educational training that the conference offered. It was at that point that I started to become a bit more comfortable and decided to dive into the experience.

Later on the first evening I was fortunate enough to attend the South Florida ALA Chapter dinner. Although I was apprehensive at first, being that this was my first conference and I had only met a few of the local members in passing, but it turned out to be a great evening. Every aspect of the first night of the conference was great. Our local chapter picked a great restaurant, there was fantastic conversation and I truly met some wonderful people. All of the local members and vendors that I met were warm, friendly and welcoming,

especially when they found out that I was attending my first conference.

The remainder of the conference flew by at breakneck speed. I met many fabulous vendors, laughed with fellow members over meals and drinks and shared interesting stories with many different members. It was at some point on Saturday morning when I realized that I was truly having fun! Again, this was my first experience with any ALA conference. Therefore, I had no idea what to really expect. I can say that I was pleasantly surprised. This is an experience that everyone should take part in at least once. Be careful though, you might have a great time, like me, and want to go back again!



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## TRACY HESS

I did it again!!! I was fortunate to attend another wonderful Region 2 conference on a SFLALA scholarship – this year, in Atlanta. I enjoy attending the conferences to educate myself and be among colleagues, to learn from, network with and form lasting friendships. This year, I participated in many local Chapter events which afforded me an opportunity to be eligible for a partial scholarship to Region 2. I worked hard to become more involved with our Chapter so that I could become more aware of our needs in terms of volunteering, membership and charity; I never dreamed that I would benefit from a possible scholarship.

When I was awarded the scholarship, I decided that this would be a chance to break out of my shell and overcome an old fear – public speaking. My first goal was to volunteer as a Session Manager -- I thought that would be a great way to practice public speaking. Unfortunately, I was too late – all sessions were already accounted for. Initially I thought “Shew, thank goodness!”, but knew that wouldn’t help me achieve my goal. I went with Plan B --- time to speak with our business partners --- more than just a simple “hello,” but rather an in depth discussion. “You can do this” I said to myself.

When the Exhibit Hall opened, with the lead and support of another colleague, I listened to how she approached our partners and thought it was easy enough to do myself. Shortly thereafter, I stepped outside of my comfort zone, walked alone and started my

own conversations. I learned that some of the partners attending the conference already had relationships with my firm and were currently working on projects. This was a huge benefit for me --- I learned about new products that our firm would soon implement (perhaps even a secret or two). I spoke with other partners who had great products, but not a good fit for our firm at this time. They understood my hesitation about making recommendations to our corporate headquarters; they appreciated my honesty.

What I learned from speaking with each partner is they appreciate being thanked for attending our conference and supporting our association. A simple “thank you” went a long way – the partners even thanked me for thanking them. Who would have guessed that would have happened? That was very satisfying.

Additionally, the conference sessions gave me the ability to speak with others. The breakout sessions gave options to discuss specific subjects and experiences which provided another good opportunity to break my silence. I met nice people and learned we share the same challenges. I hope that I was able to help them as much as they helped me. To my surprise, I learned that speaking outside of my comfort zone wasn’t as difficult as I thought --- meeting new people and learning about them (or their product) was beneficial. Aside from the conference being a great educational experience, it gave me the courage to speak to people and become more comfortable and confident meeting new people. I believe the experience will greatly benefit my career and I thank the Chapter for giving me the opportunity.

## SANDRA BORRIELLO

As an Administrator and member of ALA for almost 12 years now, I’m continuously amazed at our growing network of resources and the ALA Regional and National Conferences are no exception.

This year, as a recipient of the South Florida Chapter scholarship program, I had the honor of attending the ALA Region 2 Atlanta conference. If you have never endured a regional or national conference experience, I encourage you to do so. Since most of us are beginning to tackle the budget for next year, now is the time to convince your Partners and include a regional or national conference experience as part of your “wish list”. “Why attend?” or “What’s the point” many of our Firms ask. Well, as a seasoned Administrator and conference attendee for the last decade, perhaps I can share a few valuable reasons for attending a future conference.

First, Lawyers and law firms need to remain competitive. In recent years, legal trends have changed drastically. There are few forums where Administrators and legal professionals can bond and share informational and educational data that keeps them apprised of changes and growing trends within the legal profession. The Atlanta conference sessions included areas related to a variety of daily law office administrative and operational functions. From HR to Financial

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Management, the conference included sessions such as “Effective use of Negotiation Skills”, “Impacting Financial Performance”, “Professional Liability Contracts & Terms”, “Electronic Billing”, “Managing Information and Records” & “How to Motivate Seasoned Staff – Train, Engage & Compensate”. Regardless of your role within your Firm, Administrator, HR or functional specialist, there was a learning experience for everyone to take back to their respective firms – regardless of your Firm size, location or practice.

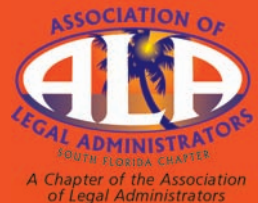
Secondly, and perhaps even more importantly, after every conference I feel rejuvenated. I truly enjoy meeting and seeing Administrators from other Firms throughout the country. I always seem to return with a new, motivated and refreshed perspective. It almost forces you to re-evaluate yourself, your management style and your role as a leader. You gain new ideas on how to effectively, efficiently and competitively run your office along with how other Firms and leaders tackle some of today’s most challenging and troubling issues in the workplace. And make no mistake, just when you think you’ve heard it all, or that you’re the “only one” experiencing the day-to-day issues and challenges, you’re

suddenly surrounded by colleagues who share the same issues and roadblocks – with everyone willingly sharing solutions and ideas.

The Atlanta conference experience was especially exciting this year because our very own South Florida Chapter had the largest turnout of any Chapter in the Region.

Like any professional organization, the ALA educational experience depends on YOU and what you are willing to partake in. You make your professional experience what it is. It is up to you to develop your personal & professional knowledge- and in the last decade, ALA and the conference experience has certainly contributed to my personal & professional development. The conference proved undoubtedly educational, inspirational and informative and the experience gained at the Atlanta Regional Conference, not only gives recognition to your respective Firm, but it also allows you to bring back knowledge and resources that you can actually use and essentially give your Firm a competitive market edge. As for me, it also gave me an opportunity to bond and become acquainted with colleagues from other offices within my very own Firm, Arnstein Lehr – a Firm which may I proudly add, encourages and supports our involvement with the ALA.

**ALA Region 2 Conference & Expo**  
**October 10-12, 2013**  
**The Peabody Memphis**  
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## To Blog or Not to Blog

By Marc C. Sanchez, J.D.

*Reprinted with permission from "AALA connection," the newsletter published by the Atlanta Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators, Summer 2012*

Perhaps, the two scariest words in the legal profession today are, "Start blogging."

The legal blog can strike fear into the hearts of seasoned partners, associates and support staff alike. When I provide workshops or trainings, I can easily sense this fear. Crossed arms, busily typing into a Blackberry or grimaced stares are not unusual. Common complaints include, "I don't have time" or "blogging is a waste of time," and still from others, "I don't get technology or social media."



In the next few paragraphs I hope to remove those obstacles and get you started blogging. Let me begin by telling you how blogging serves my practice. I'm a solo practitioner; daily I manage firm administration along with billable work. I empathize with a busy schedule, but still I daily blog. The time I spend blogging is among the most valuable in my day. Over the past two years of blogging, my practice grew from two clients in one state to a busy international practice, with

invitations to present at conferences, along with articles and citations in well-regarded publications, like the Washington Post. All of this from blogging, all of it while completing billable work and firm administration. There is always time to blog!

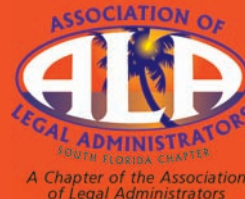
### Blogging is Quick

Blogging is as quick as reading the morning's headlines. Blogging takes time at first – everything comes with a learning curve – but it becomes

easier, faster and seamless as you make it a habit. The best tip I can give to make blogging easy is to find a niche. I practice in medical device and food law, and my blog "Food Court" breaks down topics into four subcategories. This makes blogging much more approachable. Every morning I read the day's headlines

from industry sources and the FDA and USDA. Headlines are then captured into a short blog. I've taken something I already do to serve my clients – reading industry and agency news – and turned it into a resource. It takes only an additional ten or fifteen minutes.

It's also important to set a blogging schedule. This is a great way to keep you committed and build the habit. It also sets an expectation from readers that your blog will





be a go-to and updated resource. For example, you could commit to two short posts a week and one longer post. Stick to your schedule to keep readers engaged.

### Blogging is Not Legal Writing

The biggest misconception about legal blogs is that the blogs are legal writing. Blogs are not a brief, memo, contract or any other form of legal writing. Approaching blogging as a professional, yet casual, style of writing makes the process less time-intensive. As with any good writing, know your audience – but write in an editorial style. It's also ok to write a blog for attorneys, but still avoid legal writing. Attorney-oriented blogs are great, because they help other attorneys who need a subject matter expert or a colleague to whom to refer a client when they can't take a matter. Also, keep your blog post short. We all read blogs, and I know that I appreciate blog posts that are short and to the point.

As part of developing a blog, don't be afraid to use others' work. When I'm in a hurry, I will post a blog that summarizes an article or news story in a paragraph, then copy and cite the source into the post. Other bloggers will also appreciate reposting or invitations to write for your blog. For example, I will repost and invite writing from bloggers who work with financing medical device start-ups. It not only helps me generate content, but also builds relationships with potential referral sources.

### The Value in Blogging

Any legal practice depends upon recommendations and referrals. A recent study found that over

70% of participants made a purchasing decision based on positive anonymous reviews or recommendations. How many of us rely on reviews on Amazon or Google maps before deciding what to buy or where to eat? Finding and hiring a lawyer is no different.

Blogging helps with recommendations and referrals in two ways. The first is it positions you as an expert. Clients look for a lawyer who understands the nuances of their business, case or field. Blogging is a way to demonstrate your knowledge and expertise. It gives confidence to clients to hire you and to others to recommend you. A 2012 In-House Counsel Management survey found that in-house counsel and management read legal blogs more than any other source, and said it influenced their decision on whether to hire a firm. You've taken the time to build knowledge in a particular area of law; blogging is simply a dynamic way of broadcasting that expertise.

For associates, blogging is also a means of becoming an expert. Blogging will immerse you in current issues, regulations and statutory changes, and leading cases. Taking the time to read this material and blog about it will make you an expert in and outside of your firm.

Second, blogging increases your visibility. Clients are not only busy, but also increasingly accustomed to using social media and the Internet to read their news and information. Features like an RSS feed can bring busy managers and executives all the news they are interested in with

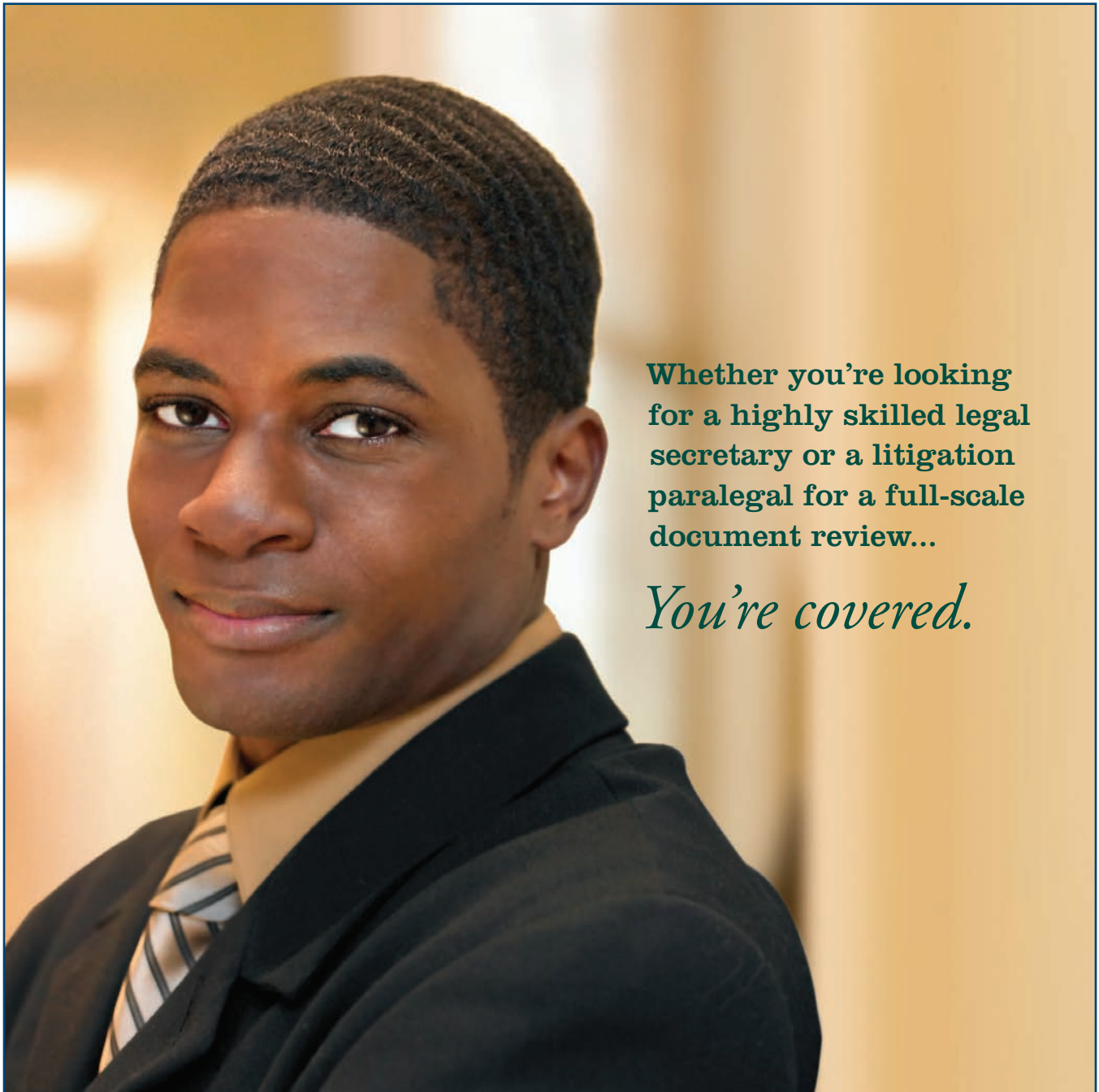
little effort. If you think about how a potential client might find you, it's easier for them to ask a friend or to search on social media. If you are consistently blogging, you are higher up in search results or more likely connected with a reader. Nearly all my clients now come from someone who reads my blog or a referral by someone who does.

I will end by saying that, not only is blogging a great business development tool, it can also be a lot of fun. Since I began blogging, I've engaged more with my audience and explored my field in a way that my practice doesn't allow me to. When else would I have an excuse to write about Dr. Oz's warning about arsenic in apple juice? Blog posts like that help me connect with readers and give my practice personality that a static website simply can't offer. I hope these quick tips will get you started. As you delve deeper and take on the challenge, there are other tips – like a separate Web domain for your blog, podcasting and using images in posts – that can enrich your blogging.



*Marc C. Sanchez is an attorney, regulatory consultant and avid blogger. Marc received his J.D. from*

*Lewis and Clark Law in Portland, and has a Masters in International Communication and Policy from Valparaiso University. Marc is well-versed in building a practice through social media, as he has grown his solo practice in large part through his blogging, presence on Twitter, and expertise in use of social media.*



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## Member Spotlight

*Meet Laura Klein, Human Resources and Marketing Coordinator  
Kluger, Kaplan, Silerman, Katzen & Levine, P.L.*

**Firm Size:** 58

**Years in Field:** 8

**What do you enjoy most about your job?** Every day presents itself with a new challenge (both good and bad), so I never have to worry about my job becoming monotonous. I also truly enjoy being around the people that I work with.

**What do you dislike most about your job?** As most others who likely feel the same, I do not enjoy having to discipline or terminate employees.

**The most difficult situation I have had to deal with was:** The initial transition to our new firm back in 2009

**In the office I try to set an example by:** Always following the firm's policies (being reliable and punctual, adhering to the dress code, scheduling time off in advance, etc.)

**If I weren't in my current position, I would like to be:** The owner of a dog/cat rescue shelter

**Favorite Musical Artist:** The Script and John Mayer

**Favorite TV Program:**  
Homeland – AMAZING!

**Hobbies:** Running, boot camp, yoga, hanging out with my doggies



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## **Calendar**

### **January 9, 2013**

12-1:30 pm

Miami Monthly Lunch  
State of the ALA by  
2012-2013 ALA President  
Steven D. Wingert, CLM

### **January 10, 2013**

Broward Lunch Meeting  
State of the ALA by  
2012-2013 ALA President  
Steven D. Wingert, CLM

### **January 10, 2013**

5-6:30 pm

Downtown Miami  
Happy Hour

### **January 16, 2013**

ALA Webinar Miami  
& Broward  
Free to all chapter  
members

### **January 17, 2013**

5-6:30 pm

Broward Happy Hour

### **January 20, 2013**

Second Annual  
Fishing Tournament

### **January 24, 2013**

5-6:30 pm

South Miami Happy Hour

### **January 29, 2013**

12-1:30 pm

Joe Altonji of LawVision  
Group will speak to  
chapter members  
over lunch in an open  
forum setting.

### **February 1, 2013**

5:30-7:30 pm

Wine Tasting

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