

Escape the Cocoon of Your Practice

BY DANIEL J. SIEGEL

I am writing this the day after returning from the spring meeting of the American Bar Association Law Practice Management Section (LPM). ABA's LPM is devoted to helping law firms of all sizes with marketing, management, technology and finance. What struck me about this meeting, and the many others I have attended, is that as much as individual lawyers think that they face unique issues, the opposite is actually the case. This is the same lesson I have learned as the author of the "Technology" columns for this magazine and for *Trial*, the magazine of the American Association for Justice.

In that context, I now look back at my tenure as editor of this magazine, which concludes with this issue. In reviewing the issues this publication has examined, I note that no matter what the topic, we address themes that almost always are relevant to most attorneys, regardless of their practice areas or the size of their firms. Despite this commonality, however, we remain in many ways a fragmented profession.

Yet ABA's LPM Section seems to cut through those artificial barriers. What I have enjoyed most in my years of activity with the Section is the fact that our "actives," as we are called, come from firms of all sizes, practice in virtually every area of law, and also include consultants and a large contingent of Canadian members. Because we all care about improving *how* we practice, what we practice is less important and, as a result, I have become close friends with many fascinating people with whom I would never have crossed paths.

In that vein, I thought about my decades of activity with the Philadelphia Bar Association and the friendships developed over the years. What struck me most is the same theme – my activities have allowed me to meet and become friends with many people I would never have otherwise met. Yes, I value the relationships with fellow workers' compensation lawyers, but I likely would have met them merely because we frequent the same courtrooms and attend the same CLEs. On the other hand, my work on this publication and my membership on the Professional Guidance Committee have opened other doors.

So what does this mean? It means that we all need to explore opportunities outside of our cocoons of practice. We need to read about what other lawyers are doing, such as Kelly Tillery's fascinating article in the last issue about the many rock stars he has worked with. We need to join committees in this Association, and others in which we are members, that go beyond the focus of our practices. And lastly, we need to recognize the diversity of our fellow lawyers, and discover that each of us brings far more to the table than our expertise in one or two types of law.

In retrospect, it is also clear that my career is a microcosm of this message. When I applied to law school, I dreamed of becoming a newspaper reporter who covered the U.S. Supreme Court, summarizing the court's pronouncements in *The New York Times* or one of the three TV networks then in existence. Like many dreams of youth, mine did not come true, and it's safe to say that at this point in my life, it probably won't come true in the future.

Before dreaming of becoming a Supreme Court reporter, I had also wanted to become a sports writer, in particular the beat writer covering the Phillies for the *Philadelphia Daily News*. When I made the decision to pursue law school instead of becoming a journalist, I did so because of my concern that that life might not be as exciting as I had wanted if I ended up covering high school sports in small towns. Of course, I could never have anticipated the demise of the print media.

Fortunately, I had another dream – to write books. As long as I can remember, I loved books and saw myself writing them. This dream has come true, in large part because of the many legal professionals who have crossed my path. In fact, each book would never exist if I had merely limited my professional interactions to those who only practiced in the areas that I did. Never could I have imagined that I would have been the author on a treatise about the ethics of changing law firms or about litigation software. While my practice now includes ethics and disciplinary representation, and my consulting firm assists lawyers and their staffs with many types of software and technology, these avenues appeared because of whom I met.





As I noted above, with this issue, I step down as editor, and move from the head of the table back to my longtime seat along the side. Because the editorship rotates annually among the members of the Editorial Board, it is unlikely that I will have the opportunity to serve as editor again. But therein lies the beauty of this publication, and this change embodies my career and helps affirm my message that *change is good*.

Every editor and every member of our Editorial Board (if you're interested in joining us, send Senior Managing Editor Jeff Lyons an email at jlyons@philabar.org for more information) offers a different perspective, and many of the members appointed with me in 2003 have helped in many subtle ways to change the nature of this publication. These changes assure that the magazine remains vital and diverse, and that members can always open its pages knowing that we publish articles and commentary not found in any other legal publication.

In conclusion, to the readers of this

magazine, thank you for allowing me to serve you this year. And to all of you, I offer this final message: don't be afraid of change and don't be afraid of focusing on your passions. Some who know me will chuckle at the idea that I am celebrating the concept of change. In many ways, I am a creature of habit – my family and colleagues know my daily routine almost as well as I do. But in many ways, my career has embodied change, and change can be wonderful. Doing what you love is a blessing, as is seeing your children every night for dinner. Thus, when you have the opportunity to serve as an editor, or in whatever position you really want, you need to appreciate just how satisfying it is to devote time to doing what you love. ■

Daniel J. Siegel (dan@danielsiegel.com), the editor-in-chief of The Philadelphia Lawyer, is a local attorney who operates the Law Offices of Daniel J. Siegel, LLC and is the president of Integrated Technology Services, LLC.

The Philadelphia Lawyer, printed with soy inks on recycled paper, is published quarterly in March, June, September and December by the Philadelphia Bar Association, 1101 Market St., 11th floor, Philadelphia, Pa. 19107-2955. Telephone: (215) 238-6300. E-mail: tplmag@philabar.org. Subscription cost for members is \$5 which is included in annual dues, and for nonmembers is \$45 yearly. The opinions stated herein are not necessarily those of the Philadelphia Bar Association. All manuscripts submitted will be carefully reviewed for possible publication. The editors reserve the right to edit all material for style and length. Advertising rates and information are available from Don Chalphin, Sales Director, ALM, 1617 JFK Boulevard, Suite 1750, Philadelphia, PA 19103, (215) 557-2359. Periodicals postage at Philadelphia and additional locations. POSTMASTER: please send changes to The Philadelphia Lawyer, c/o Philadelphia Bar Association, 1101 Market St., 11th floor, Philadelphia, PA 19107-2955

The Philadelphia Lawyer

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Daniel J. Siegel

Editorial Board

Niki T. Ingram
Jennifer J. Snyder
Justine Gudenas
Steven R. Sher
May Mon Post
David I. Grunfeld
Steve LaCheen
Harold K. Cohen
John C. Gregory
Richard G. Freeman
April M. Byrd
Emmanuel O. Iheukwumere
Audrey C. Talley
Michael J. Carroll
James Backstrom
Peter F. Vaira
Deborah Weinstein
M. Kelly Tillery
Kim R. Jessum

Editor Emeritus

Herman C. Fala

Associate Executive Director

Mark A. Tarasiewicz

Senior Managing Editor

Jeff Lyons

Design

Wesley Terry

Philadelphia Bar Association

CHANCELLOR

John E. Savoth

Chancellor-Elect

Kathleen D. Wilkinson

Vice Chancellor

William P. Fedullo

Secretary

Sophia Lee

Assistant Secretary

Jacqueline G. Segal

Treasurer

Joseph A. Prim Jr.

Assistant Treasurer

Wesley R. Payne IV

Executive Director

Kenneth Shear