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What can we learn from the first CASL Notice of Violation?

by Dar Solman, Marketing Manager at vpi Expert HR

On Thursday March 5, 2015 the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) sent out a press release stating that the first penalty for violating Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL) had been issued. The \$1.1 million "Notice of Violation" was levied against Quebec-based company *Compu-Finder*. So what can we learn about CASL from this first notice?

BACKGROUND

CASL is an act of law that affects commercial electronic messages (CEMs) such as texts or e-mails to, from or through Canadian companies. According to CASL, CEMs have specific consent requirements—recipients must opt-in to receiving CEMs and there must be a functioning opt-out option.

CASL went into effect July 1, 2014. There are steep fines attached to CASL violations but until now, it had been unclear how or if CASL would be enforced.

POINTS OF INTEREST

8 months: It has taken almost eight months for the first action to be taken on CASL. However, the violations in question occurred between July 2, 2014 and September 16, 2014 (1-3 months after CASL went into effect).

\$1.1 million!: This may sound like a lot of money (okay, it is a lot of money) but according to section 20 of CASL, fines can be as steep as \$10 million per violation. It is unclear how this exact amount was arrived at, but it is certainly an attention-grabbing figure.

4 violations: "Compu-Finder flagrantly violated the basic principles of the law," according to Manon Bombardier, Chief Compliance and Enforcement Officer, CRTC. The company was cited for four violations. One of those alleged violations is for an improperly functioning unsubscribe mechanism.

26%: Complaints against Compu-Finder accounted for 26% of complaints against spammers in that industry sector since the beginning of CASL. It has not been stated what percentage of total complaints this represents or how many complaints that 26% represents.

B2B: Ostensibly, CASL is designed to protect individual Canadian citizens from receiving spam. But Compu-Finder is a business-to-business company. Assuming that

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A new Ceridian LifeWorks survey reveals that more than 30 percent of human resource leaders have witnessed or heard about a co-worker falling asleep on the job.

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Preston Parsons discusses how our traditional mechanism for determining one's gender is now understood to be flawed as the difference between sex and gender is growing in law.

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Who We Are

The BCLMA, founded in 1972, is a non-profit organization with 140 Representatives and 270 Affiliates across BC. It is the BCLMA's goal to provide educational and networking opportunities, to enhance skills as legal administrators and managers, and to provide professional and personal benefits to its registrants.

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the complaints made against Compu-Finder were from their target demographic, it is interesting (though not out of line) that the first action on CASL is directed at protecting businesses.

Notice of violation: The citation process may not be as straight forward as the heavy fine might imply. Compu-Finder has 30 days to appeal and “submit written representations,” pay the fine or enter negotiations by “requesting an undertaking.”

CRTC: The CRTC launched this notice of violation. The CRTC is just one of the executive branches that is responsible for the monitoring and enforcement of CASL. The Competition Bureau, and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner are also charged with enforcing CASL and as of yet, have not levied any penalties for violation.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

There aren't any big surprises about this notice. The details of the company and its alleged violations are in line with CASL. Perhaps the biggest surprise is that it was issued at all. Until now, there had not been any concrete indication that CASL was being actively enforced.

There may be new information as we get closer to the 30 day deadline. But for now, the main take-away from this announcement seems to be that CASL is being monitored and enforced.

If your business is compliant with CASL, pay attention to how this case develops. Its outcome may set precedents that could affect you. If your business is not already in full compliance with CASL, you should take steps to immediately address that.

You can read the official press release at the Government of Canada News Releases site and you can review the entire legislation at the Government of Canada's Justice Laws Website.

This article was originally published on the vpi Expert HR blog.



Dar Solman is the marketing manager at vpi Expert HR, an HR outsourcing and recruitment firm in Mississauga, Ontario. In her role, Dar has developed and implemented the organization's anti-spam policy in preparation for the launch of CASL. She has also presented on the topic to help other organizations prepare.

WELCOME & KUDOS

New Member Firms and their Representatives

Kelly Wang, **Lunny Atmore LLP**, Vancouver

New Representatives of Existing Member Firms

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Ceridian LifeWorks Survey Discovers One In Three Workers Struggle To Keep Eyes Open On The Job

This article is reprinted with the permission of Ceridian LifeWorks.

A new Ceridian LifeWorks survey reveals that more than 30 percent of human resource leaders have witnessed or heard about a co-worker falling asleep on the job in the past six months. *Workplace Wake-Up Call: Pulling Back the Covers on Sleep Deficiency*, a comprehensive survey of nearly 700 HR leaders across North America, examines the sleep deficiency epidemic, which costs businesses \$63.2 billion per year in lost productivity, according to Harvard University researchers.

The average adult needs seven to eight hours of sleep each night to be completely rested. However, one-third (CDC.gov) of adults sleep six hours or less each night, due largely to today's fast paced culture that promotes constant attachment to work and mobile devices. Lack of sleep is proven to compromise workplace safety and performance, making it more difficult for employees to pay attention, complete assignments and solve problems.

Highlights of the survey are:

- Sleep deficiency is a significant workplace concern organizations must immediately better address
 - Sleep deficiency is a costly factor to productivity, presenteeism, errors and illness
 - More than 35% indicated sleep deficiency had negatively impacted productivity
 - Nearly one-third (31%) had personally witnessed or heard about a coworker falling asleep on the job within the past six months

- Shift work scheduling presents an opportunity for improvement among organizations
 - Of the half of *Wake Up Your Workforce* respondents who offered shift work, one-third indicated their schedules change in a way that supports healthy sleep for shift workers
 - 21% indicated their schedules go against the natural human circadian rhythms. Such evidence supports the critical need for manager training to support a sleep-healthy workforce
- Tools and services decrease the negative effects of sleep deficiency
 - Of the 60% responding organizations that did not offer tools and services to promote healthy sleep habits, 35% reported employees sleeping on the job
 - Of the organizations that do offer sleep health resources close to one third saw the number of employees sleeping on the job dropped by 7%, to 28%
 - As a result, those organizations

offering services and tools to support sleep health reported less often that employee sleep deficiency negatively impacted productivity

“A good night of sleep is vital for engaged, productive and healthy employees,” says Estelle Morrison, vice president of Ceridian LifeWorks. “The *Wake Up Your Workforce* sleep survey is one of the largest on this topic ever conducted with HR managers. While businesses make expensive investments in programs and technology to boost productivity, this survey reinforces the need for companies to take seriously the issue of sleep deprivation and promote healthy sleep habits in the workplace.”

In addition to providing employee assistance and wellness services, there is a significant opportunity for organizations to create progressive policies that promote healthy sleep habits. A small proportion of respondents to the survey reported the following sleep-friendly policies:

- Guidelines for managing after-hours workload: 12%
- Rules related to checking electronic devices after work hours: 9%
- Installation of “nap rooms” at the office: 9%
- Policies for international travelers pertaining to the impact of jet lag: 5%
- Sleep disorder screening programs to assess those in safety-sensitive stages: 3%

...continued on page 6

Sleep survey... continued from page 5

As a LifeWorks customer, Sleep Country is a strong advocate of promoting sleep health and its positive impact in the workplace.

"It's important to prioritize time for sleep and to protect that time from distractions and tasks," says Christine Magee, President of Sleep Country Canada. "Establishing a routine is critical to getting the rest that is needed to not only maximize work productivity, but also have the energy to fully enjoy our personal time."

Ceridian executed *Workplace Wake-Up Call: Pulling Back the Covers on Sleep Deficiency* between July 9 and July 23, 2014, in North America. 700 HR professionals representing small, mid-sized and large organizations across a wide variety of industries responded to an online survey. There is a 95 per cent confidence rating in the results.

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Pronoun Usage – Introducing You to "They"

by Preston Parsons, Associate, Overholt Law

If someone asked what the gender makeup of your firm's membership is and left a fill-in-the-blank for an answer, many would instinctively respond by writing "___% Male and ___% Female." The person filling out this answer can hardly be faulted – assuming of course that the firm is appropriately diversified with male and female members; however, it is unlikely that the person filling out the survey has ever actually asked the members of the firm what their genders are.

In our society, gender is often presumed based upon an individual's outward physical appearance. This mechanism for determining one's gender is now understood to be flawed however as the difference between sex and gender is growing in law. A person's sex refers to their assigned sex at birth and a person's gender refers to their subjective understanding of their sex. Someone whose sex and gender are the same is referred to as "cisgender." Someone whose sex and gender are

different is referred to as "transgender" (not transgendered).

If asked, many members of the firm would likely respond with "Male" or "Female" and may also be completely fine with being referred to as "he" or "she". However, what do you do if someone identifies as transgender, gender variant or gender creative? How should you address them in conversation and in correspondence?

The answer is to refer to people by the gender and pronoun that they choose to use.

For example, you have a legal administrative assistant in the firm named John, and a partner named Judy. John identifies as male and prefers the pronoun "he," while Judy identifies as transgender and prefers the pronoun "they." If you are leading a meeting at the firm where you are referring to both John and Judy, it might sound something like this:

"Judy has been working on our new environmental litigation for two months now and they are very excited about the progress. They completed all the witness interviews and their chronological report of key events along the timeline is included in the materials. Judy is of the view that this file could take considerable time and they may need to bring on a new associate as the trial will be too long for them to handle on their own. We cannot forget to mention John's contributions however as he has also been involved in ensuring this file was started off ...continued on page 8

Pronoun usage... continued from page 7
 right by contacting key witnesses, updating their information and proactively organizing the file. His proactive approach has been an asset in running this matter smoothly to date.”

Writing using they/them/their/themself is an adjustment from writing using he/him/his/himself and she/her/hers/herself. The singular “they” is a change from the writing conventions many are accustomed to, but as our society develops an understanding of the systemic barriers faced by members of the transgender community, an awareness of how others may identify outside the traditional binary classifications of male and female can help you gain respect and trust from both colleagues and clients alike.



Preston Parsons is an associate lawyer at Overholt Law, practicing in the areas of employment and labour relations, human rights and privacy law. Overholt Law is a boutique employment and labour relations firm

located in downtown Vancouver, British Columbia. For more information regarding Overholt Law, please visit overholtlawyers.com. These tips are provided for general informational purposes only and do not constitute legal advice.



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Engaging Millennials at Your Firm

by Gary Mitchell, Co-founder, Legal A Team

Much has been written and spoken about the millennial generation, and usually not favourably. Older generations often get quite frustrated with this young cohort. They won't give you their unwavering loyalty until you and your firm prove you are worth it. This presents a conundrum when the firm doesn't want to take a chance on them until they prove themselves to the firm.

It is my experience working with junior associates and law clerks that one way you can engage your millennials is to get them involved in your firm's business development. In fact, you are surrounded by a huge untapped pool of talent that, given the right approach, can take your firm to new levels. The right approach looks like this: Give them the opportunities, give them the skills, and finally give them the reward (compensation).

THE OPPORTUNITY

The first step to engaging your millennials is to identify who on your team (junior lawyers, law clerks, paralegals, even assistants and receptionists) that you think would be open to expanding their skills and earning more income while at the same time being part of growing your firm.

Don't be surprised to find more than one will jump at this chance and see it for the

huge career development opportunity it is.

Approach them one on one with your idea. Ask them if they would be interested in taking their career to the next level.

Point out the opportunities this will mean to them, the expanded responsibilities, personal and professional growth, not to mention more income.

THE SKILLS

Bring in a coach or trainer to teach them the skills required to build relationships and attract clients. By investing in them and giving them this opportunity to expand and grow in their career, you are sending them a powerful message. They are appreciated, you have confidence in them, and you would like to see them succeed beyond what they themselves could have imagined.

This builds loyalty and commitment to the firm like nothing else. Don't be surprised to

see that in addition to referrals starting to come in you notice them being more engaged in their work, docketing more, and generally becoming a more valuable asset.

THE REWARDS

You're giving them the opportunity and skills, and the final piece of this strategy is to reward them for their new behaviour.

Depending on your billing model, I offer up two compensation models which have already proven to light the flame in staff and lawyers.

CONTINGENCY MODEL

When your firm works on contingency, here's an excellent compensation model to motivate your people.

For every successful case that goes to completion, whoever brought in the file, whether via referral or direct contact, will receive a percentage of the settlement. I will leave what percent up to you to determine.

Generally, five to 10 per cent is accepted as the norm. When working on contingency, the file often takes several years to conclude. You want to offer your lawyers and staff some immediate...*continued on page 11*

Engaging millennials... continued from page 10 gratification for their hard work.

Consider offering a one-time lump-sum bonus to be paid for each new client your firm takes on.

In order to support cohesiveness and a team approach, it's wise to build in some team-wide reward system that fosters teamwork, and the sharing, rather than "hoarding" of work.

BILLABLE-HOUR MODEL

When your firm bills by the hour and you set targets for your people to reach, there is an opportunity to create a three-pronged compensation model.

The first is for hitting targets. The second is for business development. And the third prong, as noted above, is to support the team approach. The first part of this model is rewarding your people when they get close to hitting their billable targets, when they reach them and when they exceed them. This should be customized for each person. You certainly can't expect a junior law clerk to bill the same amount of hours as a senior associate. So set up aggressive yet attainable targets for each of your people. Come up with a percentage when they get close,

another when they reach their targets, and a final, generous percentage when they exceed their targets.

Based on the average revenue that each of your clients or files generate, your business development bonus structure could look something like this on a yearly basis: for up to \$50,000 in collections, they receive a five per cent bonus; from \$50,000 to \$150,000, an additional 10 per cent bonus on that amount; and for anything over \$150,000, a 15 per cent bonus on the entire collection. This is a powerful incentive, while still allowing your firm to maximize profits.

Thirdly, support a cohesive, team approach. Figure out what benchmarks you want your firm to achieve. Build in additional bonuses. This doesn't have to be strictly monetary. It could be a team outing or a spa day. But be sure to reward your team as a team.

Don't feel you have to pick one or the other. I have a client who opted for a hybrid of several different models. The important thing here is to know your people and what will motivate and reward them best.

SUCCESS STORY

The principal of a family law firm in Toronto hired me to work with his first-year associate

and law clerk. It was my first time working with a law clerk, but I followed the same approach I've followed to successfully help lawyers attract more clients. Before the end of the one-year coaching mandate was finished, the law clerk had increased her dockets by 20 per cent, and she also attracted clients that amounted to three times the investment in coaching. That's 300 per cent ROI in the first year alone.

If you want to engage your millennials, provide them with more opportunities.

When you not only engage your millennials to make them more productive and profitable, you will grow your firm and increase revenues.

Originally printed in the Lawyers Weekly and reprinted with permission.



Gary Mitchell works with lawyers, law clerks and law firms across Canada helping them to attract more clients and grow their businesses, and is co-founder of Legal A Team, a marketing and management alliance

focused on providing big firm support to smaller law firms and solo practice lawyers. His second book, 'Raindance Two: A Blueprint for Growing your Practice' is now available. He can be reached at gary@ontraccoach.com or 604-669-5235.



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Metro Vancouver Food Waste Ban Rules Now in Place. Is Your Firm Ready?

by Metro Vancouver

As of January 1, new rules are in place to encourage residents and businesses in Metro Vancouver to separate food waste from regular garbage. The region-wide Organics Disposal Ban means all of us, at home, work or school will send our food scraps for recycling, instead of to the landfill.

Already 95 per cent of single-family homes in Metro Vancouver have curbside collection of food and garden waste. While many businesses, schools, apartment buildings and malls have food recycling in place, other property managers are currently working to establish food scraps recycling in their commercial and residential buildings.

"Many businesses that are early adopters have already implemented practical solutions that reduce waste because it is the right thing to do," said Director Malcolm Brodie, Chair of Metro Vancouver's Zero Waste Committee and Mayor of the City of Richmond. "We encourage residents of multi-family complexes and businesses to talk to their landlords, property managers, and waste haulers about implementing food waste recycling plans now."

Metro Vancouver has been working behind the scenes with the region's municipalities,

school districts, grocers, restaurants, property managers, business associations and others to prepare for the ban.

WHY FOOD SCRAPS IN GARBAGE ARE A PROBLEM

When food and other organic materials end up in the garbage they:

- Create methane, a powerful greenhouse gas that adds to global warming. In the landfill, buried under layers of waste and without access to oxygen, food can't decompose properly.
- Use up a lot of precious landfill space. Space is limited, and creating more landfills is undesirable. Over 30% of what we send to the landfill in our region is compostable organics.
- Make waste-to-energy processes less efficient because of their high moisture content. About a third of the region's

waste is disposed in the waste-to-energy facility.

Metro Vancouver has one of the highest recycling rates in North America at 60 per cent. Recycling organics, including food scraps, will help our region hit a goal of 70 per cent by the end of 2015 and potentially 80 per cent by 2020.

HOW WILL THE BAN BE ENFORCED?

Like other disposal bans, the Organics Disposal Ban is enforced at Metro Vancouver and City of Vancouver waste disposal facilities (transfer stations and landfill drop-offs). When a waste hauler brings a load of garbage into a facility, the load is inspected for banned materials, and the hauler is subject to a financial penalty if the amount of banned material in the load exceeds a specified threshold.

WHEN DO PENALTIES BEGIN?

Implementation of the Organics Disposal Ban is being phased in so that generators have time to establish food scraps recycling programs in advance of penalties being levied.

...continued on page 13

Food Waste Ban... continued from page 12

January 1 to June 30, 2015

- No penalties charged.
- Loads of waste brought to a disposal facility containing over 25% food are identified, and information provided to the hauler.
- Businesses, institutions, apartments and condos encouraged to plan and introduce food scraps recycling programs.

July 1 to December 31, 2015

- Penalties begin on loads containing more than 25% visible food. An additional 50% of the cost of disposal (e.g. a \$100 load will be charged \$150).
- Businesses, institutions, apartments and condos encouraged to introduce and improve food scraps recycling programs.

2016 and 2017

- The percentage of food allowed in the garbage will be lowered, likely to 5% to align with other disposal bans.
- Businesses, institutions and residential buildings to have food scraps recycling programs.

The Organics Disposal Ban for food scraps joins a list of existing disposal bans. A complete list is available at: metrovancover.org, search 'banned materials'. Examples include:

- food scraps
- recyclable containers
- electronics
- drywall, paint
- cardboard, mixed papers, newsprint
- and more

NEED HELP?

Visit metrovancover.org/foodscraps for details on the implementation, and resources to help you get started. A brief introductory video and information pamphlets are available in five languages. Signage is available for download. There is a guide for apartment and condo managers, and another for restaurants.

A recycling hotline is established to answer questions and recommend food scraps collection service providers. Call the RCBC Recycling Hotline at 604-REC-YCLE (732-9253).

If you manage your building's waste hauling, talk to your hauler about what services they can provide in your building.

This article was supplied by Metro Vancouver. For more information, please visit metrovancover.org/foodscraps

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CryptoLocker and CryptoWall: The Threat of Ransomware

by Brian Mauch, President of BMC Networks

Imagine trying to open an important document on your network, only to find that the document has been encrypted by a malicious virus or other type of malware. You receive a prompt that your file will only be unencrypted if you pay a fee to an untraceable account. How did this happen? What can you do to get your file back? Most importantly, what could you have done to help prevent this from happening in the first place?

This scenario is playing itself out in many businesses, including local law firms. The original malware of this sort was called CryptoLocker, which first appeared in September 2013. Since then, different variants of this attack, such as CryptoWall, have been developed and released by malicious programmers on an unsuspecting public.

In December 2014, the Law Society of British Columbia released a Notice to the Profession that warned law firms about this type of fraud, suggested methods to protect their computer systems, and reminded lawyers of their obligations to keep a client's information confidential.

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

CryptoLocker and its variants are usually transmitted via infected email attachments or links in malicious emails, which are sent by multiple infected computers called botnets. The emails often pretend to be about customer support related issues from financial institutions, government agencies, or courier companies. The attachments are often executable ZIP files disguised as PDF files. If an infected email attachment is

opened and antivirus software is either not present or ineffective against that variant, the computer is infected. Computers can also become infected if the user visits websites that are serving malicious ads which deliver the ransomware when clicked on.

Once infected, a computer begins encrypting files on the local hard drive and mapped network drives. It encrypts one folder at a time, and can take hours to encrypt large collections of files.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO GET YOUR FILE BACK?

Once a CryptoLocker variant is identified, the first thing to be done is to identify which computer(s) are infected, and disconnect them from the network so they stop encrypting files. These computers should have the malware completely removed before they are connected back to the network. Sometimes antivirus software can remove the infection, but if you're unsure whether removal was successful, the safest course of action is to backup any data, reformat the computer's hard drive, and reinstall the operating systems and applications.

The next step is to identify which folders have been encrypted, which can be a time-consuming process. Encrypted files should then be restored from a recent backup. If backups are not available, paying the ransom

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Ransomware... continued from page 14
often results in the files actually being unencrypted. According to a report from Dell, the original version of the CryptoLocker collected an estimated \$30 million in paid ransom for its creators.

WHAT COULD YOU HAVE DONE TO HELP PREVENT THIS?

Unfortunately, there isn't one "silver bullet" that will protect your firms against computer malware. No antivirus software is 100% effective – the very best are usually no higher than 98% effective. The reason for this is that new malware and variants are being created every day. Antivirus developers do their best to identify new threats and update their protection, but there will always be a time lag between the creation of malware and the time when a given computer receives an antivirus update. Moreover, even the best antivirus applications have difficulty detecting CryptoLocker/Wall variants.

Since there isn't one effective shield, a five-fold approach to prevention works best:

1. Educate users to not open suspicious attachments, and confirm with (even normally reliable) senders before opening a clicking a link in an unexpected email;
2. Have a reputable antivirus application installed on all computers, and keep the antivirus application updated;
3. Protect your network connection with a gateway firewall that has antivirus capabilities, and keep the firewall updated;
4. Utilize an external firewall service such as OpenDNS Umbrella, which blocks outgoing requests to known malicious IP addresses; and
5. Above all, ensure your files are backed up regularly and reliably.

Some industry experts think that ransomware like CryptoLocker will be the future of cybercrime, in that the infection offers the end user a means with which to remove the threat and recover their files in exchange for paying a ransom. Therefore, it is vitally important to take every reasonable measure to protect your firm's network, and to educate your users about the possible dangers.



Brian Mauch, LL.B., is the President of BMC Networks, an outsourced IT provider of cloud and on-premises solutions for law firms. For more information, email Brian at bmauch@bmcnetworks.ca

SAVE THE DATE

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Stay tuned: more Information coming soon

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Understand Your Best Clients and Win Their Next RFP

By Susan Van Dyke, Principal, Van Dyke Marketing & Communications

Request for proposal. Those three words are usually the start of a slow churning stomach ache that burns until the moment your response is sent and received. And confirmed three times over. This is especially true, I have found many times over, if the request is lobbed into your office by a current client.

The potential to lose the work, and, I suppose, to lose face among both clients and colleagues, can be stressful.

Proposal responses do not require a law degree or legal drafting. In fact, they usually require plain language, practical responses and succinct promises. I often tell my clients at the outset of what's often a long and painful exercise in drafting of a typical response that the language, tone and content is different from that of a legal document. As it should be because increasingly so, the evaluators are

non-lawyers. They are your procurement department, the CFO, high level managers or board members who have little tolerance for proposal responses that are protracted and mundane. Even worse are those efforts that show little appreciation for client culture or needs.

The correlation between your understanding of the client and chances of retaining or winning work is high. Lawyers who know the client, their issues, preferences and history are equipped to appeal more directly to a client's needs

than anyone else. It's also an opportunity to showcase your understanding of the individual clients and their organizational behaviour and culture. Why is this important, you ask? Well, because clients evaluate their lawyer relative to how well they understand their business and ability to provide value.

If there was ever a reason to invest in your client – attend AGMs or planning meetings without billing, ask questions that relate to internal culture and structures, get feedback and respond with adjustments as needed, meet other key members of the client's executive team, introduce your juniors to theirs, set a Google Alert for the client, read their annual report – it is now, and hopefully ahead of the next proposal request.

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If only for your most valued and critical clients, do ensure your billing system can easily and accurately present your billing history for these clients. Some clients are billed under multiple entities or variations of their company name, so do give some thought to how you can increase the accuracy of such a system search. Many RFPs ask for this history – even institutional clients, who you might expect would have this information readily available.

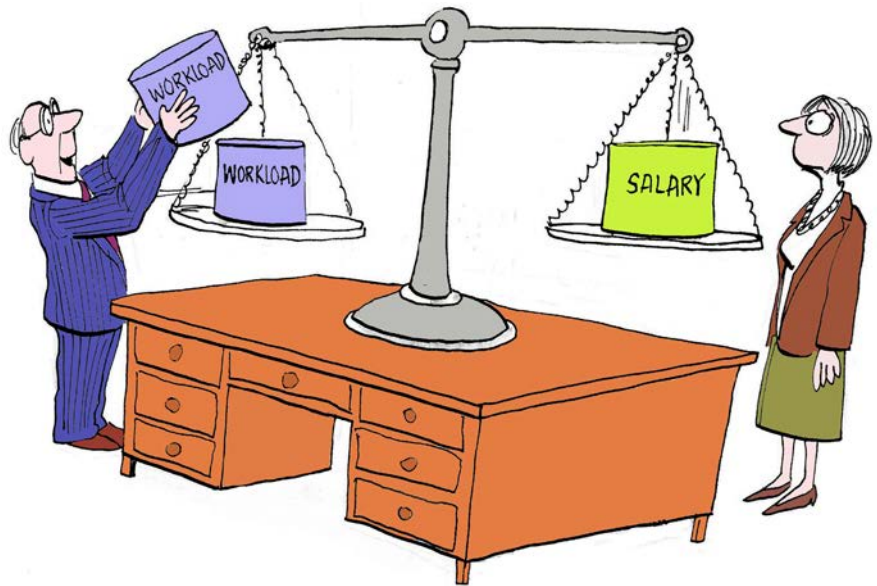
Remember, that RFP comes with a count-down clock which starts the minute you receive the request. The average deadline is usually somewhere between two and three weeks, but some require turnaround in mere days and necessitate working over an Easter weekend and Christmas holidays.

Understanding your best clients will not only give you a greater ability to meet their needs, you might just give them reason to shelve the next RFP.



Susan Van Dyke is the principal of Van Dyke Marketing & Communications. Along with her team, she helps law firms realize higher ROI in their marketing endeavours. susan@vandyke.ca

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VOLUNTEER HEROES



In this edition of Volunteer Heroes, we honour **Pelar Davidson**. Pelar is the Financial Controller at Oyen Wiggs Green & Mutala LLP, former Chair of the Finance Subsection, BCLMA (VALA), and past member of the Topics Newsletter Committee.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A MEMBER OF BCLMA?

I've been a member of BCLMA/VALA for about 12 years. When I started working at Kornfeld LLP, the administrator told me about the association and encouraged me to join. I started attending VALA meetings and eventually became a member. In those days all the meetings were held at the Met and Bonnie Kirk was the Chair.

VALA was a fantastic resource. It was a group where I could talk about accounting issues, taxes or the accounting field in general, specifically in relation to the legal industry.

LIST YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO BCLMA:

In the spring of 2010, in my second year at Oyen Wiggs Green & Mutala LLP, the chair of the Finance Subsection, Sheila Tham, asked me about running for the Finance Subsection co-chair position in the fall. In order to run for a co-chair position candidates had to make a two-year commitment: the first year as co-chair,...*continued on page 19*

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to assist and be mentored by the chair; the second year as chair. As it turned out, I stayed for four years, stepping down from the chair position at the end of last year. Being chair and co-chair is a lot of hard work. You have to come up with interesting topics that members will find valuable, plan and organize meetings, find speakers, collect money, and post information on the BCLMA website.

After becoming chair, I was approached to join a BCLMA Task Force on Small Law Firms. The task force studied how BCLMA might be able to address the CLE needs of sole practitioners.

For two years, I was a member of the TOPICS newsletter committee. In that capacity, I attended production meetings and solicited and wrote articles.

About 13 years ago, I became a founding member of the PCLaw Users' Group, a group formed to address issues that members had with the PCLaw law firm accounting software. It was also a vehicle for learning more about the software. I was able to share the information learned in this group with BCLMA members and share information learned at BCLMA meetings with the PCLaw Users' Group.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO CONTRIBUTE?

Probably the most important part for me was the access to information. I wanted to be able to share information I thought was valuable with other members. It's easier to do your job with an association like BCLMA. If a member learns something valuable, they share the information with the other members.

It also doesn't hurt that being involved increases your and your firm's profile in BCLMA.

WHAT DID YOU ENJOY THE MOST ABOUT BCLMA AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE ORGANIZATION?

The best part of BCLMA is the network of people it gives you access to and whom you can contact to get answers to questions you might have. There is a very strong camaraderie with our association. There is a lot of empathy in this group. For instance, the finance subsection does not hold a meeting in January. We know all firms are working on their year-end. It's truly a great organization. People are really friendly, inclusive and have a positive attitude. Their goal is to provide a welcoming environment where you can learn.

HOW DO MEMBERS MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR MEMBERSHIP?

When I first started attending meetings,

I found them intimidating. I didn't know anybody at the meetings, but Bonnie was welcoming and friendly and I learned a lot at each meeting. I kept attending meetings until I started recognizing people. I attended those meetings that were of interest to me. I was gathering important information so that kept me coming back.

BCLMA is such a valuable group. To get the most out of BCLMA, attend meetings and make connections.

LOOKING BACK AT ALL YOUR EXPERIENCES, WHAT ARE SOME TIPS YOU CAN SHARE ABOUT WORKING IN LAW FIRMS?

To me, the most important tip I can give is to memorize The Law Society Rules and become

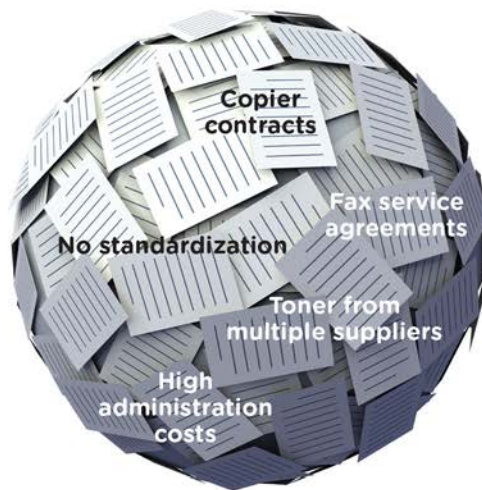
familiar with The Law Society's website. Information is key. Learn as much as you can from all the associations, such as BCLMA, that you might belong to. Connect with others in your field.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU?

In the future, I might run for the chair position for one of the other subsections. I would also like to write more articles.

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