

# Zen & The Art of Legal Networking

INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS NETWORK

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Lindsay Griffiths



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### It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year

Ah December.

The time of year when everyone is rushing around trying to finish end of the year projects and planning for next year is already underway.

There have been a lot of "end of the year" posts lately, and I've been debating whether to throw my hat into the ring.

I've been thinking about this post for a week and couldn't decide what to write about. I wanted to reflect on what I've learned in the last year, but should it be what I've learned personally? Professionally? Through Zen Legal Networking? Through our lawyers?

I just couldn't come up with a theme.

Until I read [this post](#) over at The Bloggess.

And I cried.

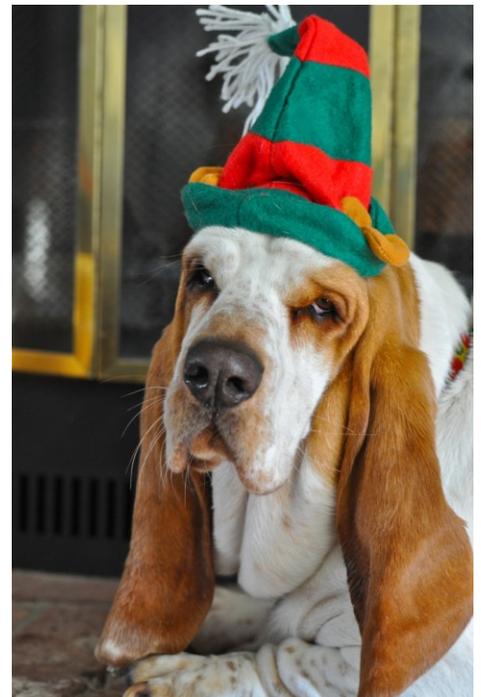
Talk about a Christmas miracle. On so many levels.

And I knew what I'd write about.

This year for me has been about relationships. Personally, professionally, and blurring the lines between both. Here's a great example - through social media, I met [Nancy Myrland](#) a couple of years ago. First, we were friends on Twitter. Then, we were Facebook friends. And then, we were friends in person. When we met for the first time, she hugged me.

Well, that's great, you might be thinking, but maybe you have enough friends and you're not looking for any more. Why I don't agree with that is a whole other post, but let me explain how any relationship can turn into business development - because I got to know Nancy well, and respect her professional and personal opinion, we're using her to present a webinar in January to our membership. She's getting the chance to show her professional side to decision makers at our firms in a way that most people don't get to do.

All because we're friends. Because I trust Nancy and know how good she is at what she does, I thought of her first when we were putting together this webinar series on social media. That wouldn't have happened if she'd just cold called me because we're both members of the Legal Marketing Association.



But this isn't limited to social media either - the ILN is all about relationships. A few years ago, I decided to do a branding exercise for the ILN. I wanted to know, what does "ILN" mean?

I surveyed our members, and the overwhelming response that I got was that it's about relationships. The members laughed at me a little when I first introduced the results at one of our conferences, but over time, they've realized that it's true.

22 years ago, a group of lawyers started this Network so that they would be able to service their clients internationally, using people that they trust. And the ILN grew.

Over the years, they've developed deep and lasting friendships because they've met each others' spouses and children, traveled the world together, sat next to each other getting fish pedicures (really!), stayed up until 5am to watch the USA-England World Cup match, tried unusual and exotic foods together, hosted each others' children for studies abroad, been invited into each others' homes, been invited to each others' weddings.

When our founder and former Chairman, Lowell Lifschultz, retired from his ILN duties a couple of years ago, he told us that his greatest joy was the friendships that he'd developed. Not the clients he'd serviced or the places he'd traveled, but the deep and lasting friendships he'd made.

These friendships can and do lead to business - our members refer work to each other not because we vet the member firms for quality (which we do on an ongoing basis), but because they get to know and trust each other. So they trust each other with their clients.

All of these things - social media, associations, alumni networks, etc. - are all just tools to facilitate relationships.

So as you're busy this week finishing up projects at work, buying last minute presents, sending out your cards and baking cookies, take a moment to remember who you're most grateful for.

For me, it's the people in my life who have given me so much support and joy this year. You know who you are.

Merry Christmas!

(Why yes, that is my basset hound in an elf hat!)

### **Comments (1)**

[Nancy Myrland](#) - December 22, 2010 11:01 AM

Lindsay, I am humbled by your mention of me in your post. I am blessed to be able to call you friend, so including me in this post made my heart swell. Thank you for everything...for being my friend, for checking in on me when family matters are calling, for hugging me back when we met face-to-face the first time, and for your trust and confidence in me when asking me to present to your members. You are a very, very special person whom I look forward to calling a friend for the rest of my life.

Lindsay Griffiths of the International Lawyers Network

179 Kinderkamack Road  
Westwood, NJ 07675  
Phone: (201) 594-9985  
Fax: (201) 740-9765