

Zen & The Art of Legal Networking

INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS NETWORK

LMA2012 - Finding our Inspiration, Part I

Posted on March 28, 2012 by Lindsay Griffiths



Every year, one of the primary reasons that marketers give for attending the [LMA's Annual Conference](#) is the sense of inspiration that they come back to the office with after the conference is over. Meeting with like-minded people, dealing with the same pressures that we all have, and finding creative solutions to meet the challenges of our clients is a surefire recipe for returning to the office with more than one good idea to implement.

As with any conference, some of the sessions will be inspiring, others will be necessary, and still others will be lacking a little something. This year, we were lucky to start out with a bang, first hearing from the LMA's Executive Director, [Betsi Roach](#), followed by LMA President [Alycia Sutor](#). And the real kickoff to the conference started with [James Kane](#)'s keynote speech.

Before I get into their comments, I will say that I'm coming a bit late to the game here on the re-caps. A few people have already shared their comments about the sessions, and I'm working a bit out of order. But since I'm never one to keep my own experiences to myself, I'm hoping you'll find value in my re-cap as well.

Since I'll go into detail about James Kane's presentations, I'll leave you with just my key takeaways from Betsi and Alycia. Betsi challenged the audience to "take one step" this year. We can often get so caught up in the big changes that we'd like to make, the big projects we'd like to implement, that we get stuck where we are, not sure what to do first. The answer to that is just to take one step. Take one thing we learned at the LMA conference and do that. When it's done, do the next thing. Excellent advice that reminds me of my favorite Martin Luther King quote – "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."

Alycia did a fabulous job of firing up the crowd by reminding us that when we get down and wonder if our work really matters, that it DOES. She challenged us to think "what if?" which Heather Morse gets into more depth about in her post over at the Legal Watercooler called "[What If?](#)"

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Then, we were treated to a truly wonderful presentation from James Kane, a consultant, speaker and author, who talked to us about loyalty. Was he reinventing the wheel? No, but he delivered his presentation in a way that showed he took great care in preparing it specifically for our group, and he interacted with those of us on Twitter both during and following the conference. He's showing us by the power of example how to create loyalty by doing it, rather than just talking about it.

Finding Something Familiar

He began his presentation by introducing himself, using everything from facts and interests to his social security number to give us a reason to feel connected to him and invested in his presentation. It's about finding something that we had in common with him, something that we recognized and liked about him. (The takeaway being how can we communicate with our clients so that they find something that they recognize and like about US)

He talked about how people need communities, and how if you can't fit into the community, there's the risk that you'll be pushed out of the "tribe."

Levels of Relationships

James then went on to describe the different levels of relationships, which he says all relationships fall into. These start with "antagonistic," which is basically "I hate you." This stage goes beyond a simple dislike of the person – you have such a passion for disliking them that you tell everyone about it. As an example, he used the airline that he regularly flies, but despises, and tells everyone else not to use them to travel.

The next stage is "transactional," which is when people see themselves as having equal exchanges with no expectations. For example, someone sells a product and you pay for it and you're "even."

Following this level is "predisposed." At this level, you don't love or hate the person, but if the game changes, you'll rethink the relationship. As James describes in the Loyalty Workbook he shared with us following the conference:

"When someone is in a predisposed relationship they are basically content and satisfied. They don't 'love' you and will probably stay with you until something better comes along. But rest assured, when something or someone better does come along, or when they need to choose between you and some other alternative, they definitely will leave you or let you go. This is why satisfied relationships are never an indicator of long-term loyalty."

This description struck the biggest chord for me in terms of the legal profession. I've heard from many clients that they are satisfied with their current counsel (i.e. [Jeff Carr's comment](#) that firms are "meeting requirements"), and that means if something changes – price, maybe a surprise in the bill – or

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something better comes along – like a firm with more value for the money – they’re going to leave you behind. So it’s important to determine whether your clients are just satisfied, or if they’re really loyal.

This isn’t limited to clients either. Over the weekend, we were discussing how these days, many young lawyers aren’t necessarily going to stay with their firms for the long term. So it’s equally as important to find out whether the good, talented young attorneys (and even more senior partners!) are just satisfied with their relationship with the firm, or whether they are truly loyal.

So, as you may have guessed, the final stage is “loyal” or the “I love you!” level. At this level, people are willing to retain a relationship and they will give you opportunities. For attorneys, this is all about the opportunities your clients will give you, as well as advocacy and the forgiveness of mistakes. James talked also about what loyalty is not about – it’s not about subservience, brand, or a rewards program (he again told us about the airline with whom he is a member of their rewards program, but he hates them).

He reiterated that loyalty is not about satisfaction, which is so marginal. Using the example of cats and dogs, he said the difference between them is that dogs are loyal, while cats are satisfied. He challenged us as marketers to see which of our relationships with our attorneys are like those of cats, versus those of dogs. In these relationships, satisfaction is only a mood – loyalty is a behavior. He went further, saying that satisfaction is about what we do for them, while loyalty is about what they do for us.

Jim said that what makes us different from animals is that we live in social communities and we’re able to learn from each other. To live in these communities, we need to be able to trust each other. Our brains teach us who we can and can’t trust. Unlike other species, from the moment we arrive in this world, we are dependent on another human being. Our brains are constantly looking for this same kind of reassurances no matter what situation we’re in, personal or professional.

Tomorrow, we’ll get into the second part of Jim’s presentation. (Photo credit: from James Kane’s website)