



[Creative Law Practice: Love Your Clients, Love Yourself](#)

August 12, 2010

The aftermath of attending a large conference such as the ABA Annual always leaves me in a pondering mood, as if the experience has changed my perspective, but I'm not sure how. There is always a whirlwind of input: presentations and meetings and networking that are exhilarating and exhausting at the same time. And I find myself asking: what concept addressed at the conference was the most interesting as a reflection of how the profession was changing?

Certainly in these times, there were lots of concepts to choose from. Law practice today feels like a moving stream of new ideas and processes and challenges. The way law is practiced has never been a topic so front and center as now, when technology, economics, social media and the legal marketplace has rolled over professional traditions like a tsunami over beach tents. How to conduct an effective voir dire has been replaced with how to use jury selection technology. Substance abuse as the hot ethics topic has been replaced with the efforts to define ethical conduct in cyberspace. Virtual law practice presentations dominated the law practice management track. Technology and social media issues simply infiltrated the schedule of events as if they had seniority.

But there is another theme emerging at these events, somewhat understated but, I think, very telling in the evolution of practicing law as we know it. It reveals how new concepts of lawyering have been influenced by the canons of social media marketing: being authentic and creating relationships with consumers for business success. And hopefully it reflects the realization that aggression and manipulation need not be two hallmark attributes of a good lawyer.

The theme is a two-fold concept: practice law by aligning our professional selves with our authentic selves, and by authentically connecting with and caring about our clients. Not exactly consistent with what we learned in law school.

Back in the day, I worked hard to become that thing that women become when they learn how to be as aggressive as men. I didn't care about my clients; in fact, I hated meeting with them, when I had to listen to their agonizing stories of victimization. And I didn't care about myself, that I was trying to be someone I wasn't. My litigation days lasted about 7 years, then I decided to have children, later moving on to endeavors within the legal profession that didn't require setting foot in a courtroom.

Now I look at the ABA CLE schedule and see courses like [Fuel the Spark: Success in Law and Life](#), led by Kevin Houchin, founder of [The Space Between Center](#) For Creative Spirit in Business. The event focused on 5 guiding values for balancing your life and a legal career. It started with a 15-minute guided meditation intended

to bring home the point that before you structure your practice, it's best to get comfortable with yourself (I seem to have missed that one in my law school's curriculum). Kevin's Space Between Center was founded to help people reach their full potential through intertwining personal, creative and business development.

Then there was [The Revolutionary Business Model for Lawyers: Systems to Make More Money AND Be Loved By Your Clients](#), led by [Alexis Martin Neely](#). This event introduced participants to a system for solos and small firms that shifts from the old, traditional and broken law practice model into a new paradigm business model that clients love, is sustainable financially and allows you to work just 3-4 days in your office. The goal is to be the lawyer you always wanted to be, and be loved (and paid) by your clients.

Outside of the confines of the ABA Meeting, you will find sites/communities like [Cutting Edge Law](#), whose goal is to help lawyers define themselves as peacemakers, problem solvers and healers of conflict. The founder, J. Kim Wright, authored [Lawyers As Peacemakers](#), published by the ABA. Her venture has inspired global discussion about the value of lawyers in humanizing conflict.

Technology and economics are clearly driving forces in shaping the future of our profession. The legal and ethical issues to be explored are overwhelming, requiring the dedication of those passionate about the process and the results. But there is also something else afoot: an acknowledgement that our legal system has been defined by a model of confrontation and arrogance that doesn't work. Putting a human face on the participants in legal conflict, both clients and their attorneys, can change a system that often leaves waste and disillusionment in its wake.

Is this the experience you expected when you envisioned your practice? Or were you anticipating a more satisfying result for both you and your client?