



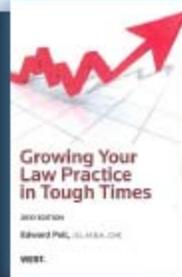
Week of **March 23, 2010**

## Rethinking the Process of Lawyer Education (Part 1)

In late January my company, LawBiz, was privileged to co-host an [online seminar](#) with West Legal Edcenter, focusing on the theme of whether recent law school graduates are prepared for real life. Longtime readers of *LawBiz® Tips* know that my answer to this question is a resounding "no," that law schools do virtually nothing to prepare their graduates for dealing with "The Business of Law®" that ultimately determines the success of their practices. Three recent law school graduates spoke during the webinar, and their comments about their lack of real world preparation could only be described as poignant.

This is particularly significant as big law firms continue to cut back on their law school hiring, leaving many graduates (who typically have six-figure debt from their legal education) to think that their only option is to go into practice for themselves. Yet without basic knowledge about the operation of the firm as a business (budget, collections, profit, loss), their chances of success are dim. There is also the issue of technical competence at the law: in highly personal, difficult issues like bankruptcy or divorce or tax problems, what kind of representation will their clients receive from young lawyers who are getting their on-the-job training this way?

Such concerns illustrate anew that the entire concept of continuing legal education has to change. In many states, the practical skills concerning "The Business of Law®" that lawyers most need to run a practice either are not covered or actively eliminated as legitimate MCLE credits. They also happen to be skills that few, if any, law school faculty offer either. Many lawyers, and not just young ones, feel they have neither an efficient nor an effective way to learn how to build a better practice that better serves clients. But whatever makes a better lawyer benefits both the firm and its clients, whether it falls under a traditional



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CLE banner or not.

Already there are specialized certifications that state bar associations increasingly offer in certain practice specialties. Specialists and their clients do benefit in some way from the more intensive training, but this really is just an extension of the typical CLE requirements. What if bar associations took the principle farther, by offering to lawyers specialist certifications in such skills as trust fund accounting or client satisfaction surveys? How is this different from the specialized training that many lawyers have received by earning their CPA designation, or an MBA? The questions are important, and they need to be answered creatively if CLE training is to meet the real needs of lawyers in today's marketplace. My next *LawBiz Tip* will suggest two approaches that support the need for practical education of newly graduated lawyers.

## Personal Commentary

I am very excited! I just received my new book, **Growing Your Law Practice in Tough Times!** And I am very proud of this work. Our pre-release pricing discount will remain in effect until the end of this month. Please do take advantage of it, and send me your thoughts and comments. I'm eager to learn more about the challenges you face in your day-to-day practice and begin a series of teleseminars to directly address your specific issues. Thanks for reading our weekly tips. I look forward to hearing from you.

Check out [LawBizBlog.com](http://LawBizBlog.com) this week for a new Photo Caption Contest featuring Bandit! The contest comes in time for Legal Assistant's Day, which is this Friday. The winner of the contest will receive a FREE copy of my brand new book: **Growing Your Law Practice in Tough Times**. So get creative—we're looking forward to your captions!



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Best wishes,

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