

Big Law Gives it Away #LCMO

Each year DLA Piper puts on [one of the foremost real estate conferences in America](#). You would think that at a conference like this they would want to highlight their best and brightest attorneys, but they don't. In fact, I learned yesterday at the Law Firm Business Development Forum (where many of you have seen me tweeting under the hash tag "#LCMO") that DLA Piper doesn't have a single one of their attorneys on the panels. The [panelist list](#) reads like a "who's who" in the real estate industry from big hitters like the CEO of Global Hyatt Corporation to the Managing Director of Barclays Capital. What do they charge attendees for the content, the conference and the cocktails afterward? Nothing. This event is free to attendees.

So why are they giving it away for free?

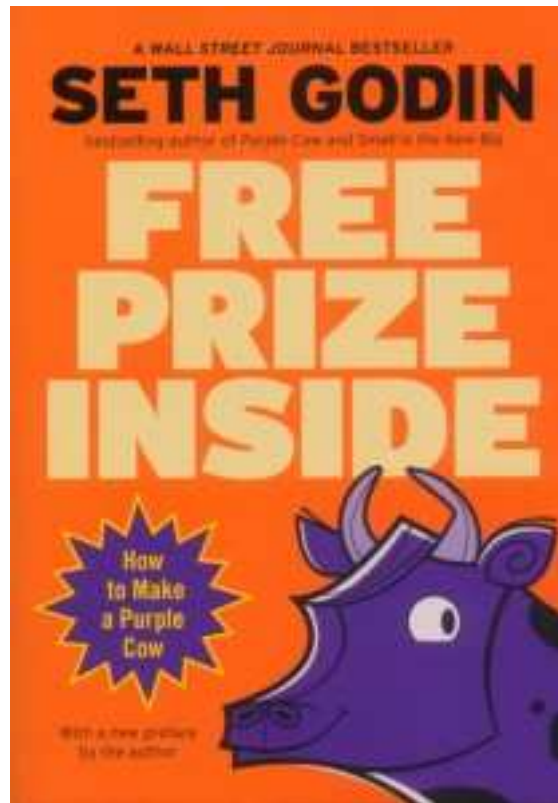
Why aren't they stacking each panel with an attorney or two?

There are a lot of different reasons that Attorney [Jay Epstein](#) explained for this at yesterday's conference. They didn't charge so they could get a better turn out, they didn't stack the panels to give the sessions greater credibility. The real reason for these tactics though wasn't explained by Jay. It was just below the surface. I suspect the real reason for the conference wasn't to pitch legal services- but instead to build goodwill and strengthen relationships. Taking clients to a Yankees game is smart, but helping your clients make more money is brilliant. Jay Epstein explained that a different lawyer was in charge of organizing each panel- networking with each of these thought leaders along the way. You better believe that during the breaks between sessions that the DLA Piper attorneys were pressing the flesh and making their presence known right on through the evening cocktail party. At the end of the day, when the panelists and participants are all drinking cocktails- what are they thinking about? They are thinking about what they learned, and how they can apply it to their business. When they remember what they learned in the

weeks and months that follows they will remember DLA Piper not as the creator of the content- but as the source. DLA Piper has figured out that you can gain credibility without tooting your own horn.

DLA Piper has picked up on a HUGE trend that is sweeping not just the legal community but society at large. People are very cynical of anything "sales" related, and brand marketing just doesn't work the way it used to. Airport billboards or charity golf tournaments for example are so in-your-face that they lose firms more credibility than they gain them. This trend is especially true online. Law firms need to stop broadcasting "we are awesome" and start showing they can help their prospects- by helping them. The more you give, the more you get. DLA Piper get's this, and many other large firms are catching on. Like Wilson Sonsini that has a free term sheet generator on their website, or Latham and Watkins that is doing the same thing with LPO contracts. Big law is starting to realize a simple marketing truth that grocery stores figured out decades ago:

People love free samples.



When you need an answer to an easy question- you can Google it to find your free sample. If the second time you run a search that same source comes up- you may go straight to the source next time. Buyers of legal services are doing the same thing, and your snappy marketing slogans aren't coming up in their Google searches. They want that free sample, they want to get their questions answered- and answering their question is a great way to get their attention. Think GC's aren't yet "googling" to find their answers? Wednesday morning Anne Chwat, General Counsel of Burger King, told the story of being surprised with a class action suit for violating an anti-trust rule she didn't know existed. What did she do? She did a search for it, and one name came up with the right content right on topic. She found her free sample through Google, and that led to an engagement.



Does this concept conflict too strongly with the world view of many of the big law players? Will the partners fear a slippery slope where nobody pays for anything anymore? Change always causes fear, but while your older partners are wasting time debating the question "is it or isn't it worth it to give away valuable content?" the DLA Pipers and Wilson Sonsini's of the world will be generating traffic, building relationships and eating your lunch.

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