

CYLA News

California Young Lawyers Association
The State Bar of California



Representing and advocating the interests and needs of the young and new lawyer members of The State Bar of California.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

2006

August

3rd – 6th - ABA-YLD Annual Meeting, Honolulu, Hawaii

25th – CYLA Board Meeting
San Francisco
10:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

October

5th – 8th State Bar of California Annual Meeting, Monterey

6th – 7th CYLA Board Meeting, Monterey

6th - Awards Reception Presentation, Jack Berman Award of Achievement
Portola Plaza Pavilion
5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

December

New Admittee Swearing-in Ceremonies (July Exam)



CYLA Members Invited to Attend Meeting in Monterey

The State Bar's Annual Meeting will be held in beautiful Monterey, October 5-8, 2006. The Annual Meeting presents an opportunity to attend high quality MCLE programs presented by your colleagues from around the state. The CYLA Board of Directors meets during the Annual Meeting, and any CYLA member is welcome to attend the business meeting of the CYLA Board of Directors. Monterey is a wonderful family venue, and a visit to the local aquarium, Cannery Row, or nearby state parks can make a nice break from your work routine.

Also, the Annual Meeting affords a number networking opportunities with colleagues as well as leaders of the State Bar. Come and participate in the Awards Reception, Friday, October 6 from 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. when I will have the honor of presenting the Jack Berman Award of Achievement to Cynthia Hayashi. Immediately following the Awards Receptions, CYLA will be hosting a hospitality suite from 7:30 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. The location will be listed in the final Annual Meeting program. I hope that you will stop in and join us. This year, there are a number of ticketed social events. Keynote speakers ranging from Susan Stamberg, a host on National Public Radio, to Martin Luther King III, son of Martin Luther King, Jr., to nationally known author Isabel Allende and Justice William Bedsworth. I, along with the rest of the CYLA Board of Directors, encourage you to register and attend the State Bar's Annual Meeting this year and join us in the hospitality suite on Friday evening.

We hope to see you in Monterey!

Francis S. Ryu
President, CYLA

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES:

CYLA Sponsors MCLE in Monterey

Each year, CYLA sponsors some of the many fine MCLE programs presented at the Annual Meeting. The State Bar's Annual Meeting will be held on October 5-8, 2006 in Monterey. This year, CYLA is sponsoring a panel on the practical aspects of Opening a Law Office and a dynamic, interactive Ethics Jeopardy program. These programs offer fun and interesting ways to fulfill MCLE requirements and network with your colleagues. For more information about registration, or to register to attend, the Annual Meeting, its programs, and social events, visit the State Bar's website at http://calbar.ca.gov/state/calbar/calbar_generic.jsp?cid=11368.

PRACTICE TIP:

"Become a certified specialist in your field...and set yourself apart from the other associates seeking that elusive partnership slot."

USEFUL LINKS:

[ABA-Young Lawyers Division](#)

[Barrister Organizations](#)

[Ethics Hotline](#)

[Lawyer Assistance Program](#)

[Legal Research](#)

[MCLE Compliance Information](#)

[Member Services](#)

[Specialist Certification](#)

PRACTICAL TIPS:

Set Yourself Apart with a Specialist Certification

By J. Scott Bovitz

Become a certified specialist in your field...and set yourself apart from the other associates seeking that elusive partnership slot. While the standards are high, certification is within your reach.

There are approximately 44 certifications available in state and private programs. About 31,000 attorneys have been certified in their particular areas of expertise.

The populous states of California, Texas, Florida, and New Jersey -- along with the smaller states of Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee -- have attorney certification programs. California has more than 4,000 certified specialists. Certification is currently available in: Appellate Law; Bankruptcy Law; Criminal Law; Estate Planning, Trust and Probate Law; Family Law; Immigration and Nationality Law; Taxation Law; and Workers' Compensation Law.

Private organizations also certify attorneys. The American Bar Association Standing Committee on Specialization (<http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/specialization>) and the California Board of Legal Specialization (<http://californiaspecialist.org>) accredit the best of these private programs. Accredited organizations certify lawyers from all 50 states in the following fields: Business Bankruptcy Law (American Board of Certification, <http://www.abworld.org/abchome.html>); Consumer Bankruptcy Law (American Board of Certification); Creditors' Rights Law (American Board of Certification); Civil Trial Advocacy (National Board of Trial Advocacy, <http://www.nbtanet.org>); Criminal Trial Advocacy (National Board of Trial Advocacy); Family Law Trial Advocacy (National Board of Trial Advocacy); Elder Law (National Elder Law Foundation, <http://www.nelf.org/findcela.asp>); Accounting Malpractice (American Board of Professional Liability Attorneys, <http://www.abpla.org>); Legal Malpractice (American Board of Professional Liability Attorneys); Medical Malpractice (American Board of Professional Liability Attorneys); and Juvenile Law (Child Welfare) (National Association of Counsel for Children, <http://www.naccchildlaw.org>).

Certification programs help consumers and lawyers identify qualified attorneys in specialty areas. The programs also encourage attorneys to improve their skills as they reach for certification. As former Florida Attorney General Charlie Crist noted, certification "is an excellent opportunity for individual lawyers to specialize in an area of interest and advance their level of professionalism." Crist also said "participation in the program benefits all...lawyers, as board-certification advances ethical credibility within the legal profession and creates a network of highly-qualified attorneys with an

improved ability to serve their client's legal needs."

A certified specialist earns peer recognition. In 2005, Congress recognized that certified specialists may be able to justify a higher hourly rate than their contemporaries. See, for example, 11 U.S.C. § 330(a)(3)(E) (regarding awards of fees to bankruptcy professionals). Also, some malpractice carriers also may provide a discount on insurance premiums for firms with certified specialists.

To be certified as a specialist, a California attorney must be involved in her field for the past five years, pass a written examination in her specialty field, demonstrate a high level of experience in that field, fulfill heavy education requirements in the field, and be favorably evaluated by other attorneys and judges familiar with their work. Refer to <http://californiaspecialist.org> for the detailed certification requirements (or to find a certified specialist). The next examination will be in August 2007.

J. Scott Bovitz is the senior partner of Bovitz & Spitzer in Los Angeles. He is a Certified Specialist in Bankruptcy Law and is Chair of the State Bar of California Board of Legal Specialization (<http://californiaspecialist.org>).

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

A THOUSAND ROADS

Choosing the Course of a Legal Career

By Deborah Ben-Canaan
and Catherine K. Rogers

Graduation Day! Hats off to you—but now the real work begins. Where to now? How do I get there? As a new graduate, these are a few of the questions you will be asking yourself this spring. The possibilities are endless, but how do you find your dream job?

At the same time, you should think about what practice areas are most attractive to you as this will help dictate which opportunities you consider. This decision could have a profound effect on your lifestyle and pocketbook for years to come as well as shape your early career decisions. This is the time to choose opportunities that will provide strong legal training and give you the résumé cachet you need. Don't necessarily pick a practice area that is currently hot or even on your prediction of what will be hot in the future—the flavor of the month can change quickly, as recent events have confirmed.

Once you have given your long-term goals and practice area considerable thought, now is the time to embark upon your job search. In Southern California, the legal market is back on the rise and you should have before you a significant array of possibilities. That said, the stark truth is that academics do make a difference. Your law school, grades, ranking and activities all play a key role in the number of opportunities available to you as a first-year attorney. Use your strengths wisely. For instance, in San Diego there is a significant need for attorneys within the intellectual property practice area, and consequently employers will look at lawyers with scientific and engineering backgrounds as a natural fit. Because of this higher demand, employers may be willing to entertain candidates with less-than-perfect academics. Other than these concrete facts, employers look for intensity, drive and commitment—all packaged in a fabulous personality. These are the special attributes that will help you be a successful lawyer. Traditionally, there are four main starting points for recent law school graduates: law firms, corporate legal departments, government employment and hanging your own shingle. Each of these comes with its own advantages and disadvantages.

Law Firm

Do not automatically jump to the most highly regarded firm that will have you. You should consider going to the firm that provides the best training ground and organizational culture for you. That said, it is always easier to swim down the food chain from a larger, well-known and well-regarded firm than vice versa. Many of the better large firms that provide good training also add tremendous résumé value. It also doesn't hurt that they usually pay higher salaries, allowing speedier repayment of student loans, not to mention the purchase of the fancy foreign car that seems to be a staple in Southern California. You may also want to consider looking at well-known boutiques if you have significant interest or background in one particular practice area. Although joining a strong law firm provides the most long-term options for a young attorney, it is not without its drawbacks. The hours are long, expectations can be excruciatingly high, and the competition is fierce.

Corporate Legal Departments

Corporate legal departments each have their own character and culture, with different structures, needs and atmospheres. As an in-house attorney, your

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value is determined by your ability to reduce the total cost of legal services by providing a more cost effective alternative to using more expensive external resources and, more important, by contributing to the overall success of the company's growth and profitability. Also, because there is only one client now, your employer, you feel closer to the deals, part of the business team and can provide intimate assistance. You also gain more depth in the domain in which you work. You need to quickly know the issues and possible solutions for the matters at hand and be able to present them in lay terms to executive management. However, a corporate legal department can be more hierarchical than a firm, and those outside the law department will dictate policies and procedures. Also, junior lawyers act as a support function to the company's business; they are not the revenue generators that they are in a law firm. Most important, there is usually a serious lack of legal training in this environment, which can hinder a young attorney's growth.

Government Employment

A perfect way to get a taste of our judicial system is to clerk for a judge. There are certain coveted judicial clerkships that are both a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and highly prized by employers. These typically last one to two years and are a great segue into top law firms. Another entrée into public service is joining a city, county, state or federal prosecutorial agency as a great way to get your feet soaking wet as a new litigator. The knowledge you gain in these positions is invaluable and, while quenching your thirst for being a do-good attorney, will also potentially lead to a fulfilling career in public service or private practice. While serving your community, you may feel like Atticus Finch—but realize that you may not be able to afford San Diego housing.

Solo Practitioner

Many recent graduates may choose to open their own practice. This option allows for a great deal of autonomy, a flexible schedule, the ability to practice in many different areas and the freedom from academic criteria used by large law firms. In this capacity you will be able to choose your clients and be your own boss. However, be aware there are considerable startup costs (rent, insurance, marketing, etc.) and no standard benefits package. In addition, there are no formal legal training and mentor-mentee relationships that oftentimes are necessary for the growth of an attorney. The solo practitioner must spend countless hours dealing with administrative issues, client generation and development, and building credibility—all with no paycheck.

Regardless of your choice, you will have a steep learning curve and no cheat sheet. Be prepared to work harder than you ever did in law school. Do your best to stay in one position for several years, as this will demonstrate stability for future employers. Just remember, career assessment is more art than science. It takes research, self-assessment, good advice from peers and a reputable legal recruiter, favorable job market conditions and often luck to achieve an enduring match. But given the high stakes of professional satisfaction and how that affects your life, it is undoubtedly worth the effort.

Deborah Ben-Canaan, Esq., and Catherine K. Rogers are managing directors of the San Diego office of Major, Lindsey & Africa, a legal search firm with 17 offices worldwide. They may be reached at dbencanaan@mlaglobal.com and crogers@mlaglobal.com, respectively. Reprinted with permission.

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