

## BUSINESS &amp; CAREERS

# In uncertain times, seize opportunity

If the economy has you down, there is reason to keep your chin up. It's not bad news for every lawyer and every practice area, in fact it's good news for some.

Recently, I went back and read some of the articles and presentations I wrote from 2008 until early 2010 — *Crisis vs. Opportunity, Are you going to lead or follow?* and so on. I find not a lot has changed since then. There is still a lot of uncertainty out there. And there is a lot of opportunity.

So what to do? Get busy. Your competitors are likely feeling the same way you are. They are worried about their billable hour targets and where the next file is going to come from. What can you do to get ahead of them? There are three key areas on which you should focus. If you are not busy with your billable hours, what do you have to lose?

The first key area is to shore up and strengthen current client relationships by looking for ways to add more value to your services and approach. Get your rolodex out and look at your top clients. Give them a call, schedule a lunch, send them an email and get together. Find out how the doom and gloom mentality in the media is



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affecting them. What's on their mind? Where is their stress? Where are the opportunities for you to help them alleviate that stress? If nothing else, this will show you care and help to solidify your relationship with them. You might however just stumble upon a pressing need, one where you can help.

Last month, I attended a Legal Marketing Association event in Vancouver covering the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC) Value Challenge. The main speaker was Fred Krebs, a consultant with the ACC. The ACC launched their value challenge back in 2008 just ahead of the recession. Their aim was to reduce costs and add value, increase productivity, and improve outcomes. As Krebs mentioned when the recession hit, it bolstered this effort and as a result more and more firms were listening and willing to try new

things to shore up existing relationships with clients, as well as develop new ones.

On the topic of adding value, here is a link to the top 51 things you can do to add value according to ACC and its members: <http://www.acc.com/legalresources/resource.cfm?show=939328>.

And according to Krebs, ACC members report their outside counsel does not understand the pressure they are under in-house. What can you do? Find out more. Learn more about the pressures they face so you can alleviate some or all of them. Yes this is going to take time, and yes its hard work. Then again, if you are not busy right now with billable hours, what else are you doing?

Second is to get your name and face out in front of more potential clients. Whether it's networking, presenting, or publishing relevant articles in publications that target your ideal markets, the idea is to get your face and name in front of as many people as possible. But that's not enough either. Find ways to build relationships.

Recently one of my clients discovered her clients create internal newsletters and distribute them to their members. Her client gave her precise information on topics that would be highly valuable to that organization. All she had to do was ask. So now my client is approaching her top prospects with this same approach: "What can I do for you?" "What would be a topic of interest?" "What valuable information is missing for your people?" "How can I help you educate your people?"

What a great way to introduce yourself. Instead of going on about your expertise, demonstrate it and at the same time give your prospects something they need, and

an excuse to give you a call when something comes up. So make a targeted list of companies or people you would like to do work for and approach them in this value-added way. Make a list of relevant publications to contribute to, and look for events where you can present valuable and relevant information to prospects. And then get out there and do it.

The third approach I recommend you take is to look for ways to become more innovative in how you offer and deliver your services. Going back to point one, after you have taken the time to learn more about your clients, their needs, the big picture, you are far more likely to identify areas where you can improve the ways you serve your clients. These may include any number of things, alternative billing arrangements, communication, avoiding redundancies, streamlining processes, delegating certain files down to where they can most cost-effectively be delivered and so on.

The point here is talk with your clients. What you learn from them will not only serve you in better serving them, but these new approaches can easily be used for leads. There is great opportunity out there right now.

So pick you head up from your desk and get busy. Your competition is likely paralyzed with fear and won't be doing much in the way of business development or marketing over the next few months to a year. This leaves incredible gaps and openings for you. ■

*Gary Mitchell works with lawyers to help them increase revenues through business development and marketing efforts.*



## INSURANCE DEFENCE COUNSEL

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From our 6 lawyer inception in 1997, we have grown to 30+ lawyers in 2011. We are an insurance defence boutique law firm, located in Downtown Toronto, with excellence in providing defence of tort, accident benefits, property and general insurance litigation matters.

### What we are looking for:

- You have 2+ years of prior experience as an insurance defence or plaintiff lawyer, experience with accident benefits will be considered an asset.
- You are a member in good standing with the Law Society of Upper Canada.
- You are a strong team player with excellent client relations.
- You are able to work in a fast-paced team environment and meet demanding deadlines.
- You possess excellent written and oral communication skills.
- You have strong organizational skills.

Salary based on experience. Benefits package available.

Please forward your resume to [careers@ztgh.com](mailto:careers@ztgh.com) quoting "Insurance Defence Counsel" in the subject line of your email application.

*We thank all applicants. However, only those selected for an interview will be contacted*

Bond University, located on Australia's Gold Coast, is a private, not-for-profit University dedicated to shaping graduates who are leaders and thinkers, imbued with initiative, enterprise and a continuing quest for lifelong learning.

## Assistant / Associate Professor or Professor - Canadian Law

Faculty of Law  
Continuing or Fixed Term, full-time appointment  
Position Reference No: LAW11127

The Faculty of Law at Bond University is the premier Australian school of law for Canadians studying abroad. It has over 150 Canadians enrolled in its Juris Doctor program and offers an array of Canadian core subjects. The Faculty of Law is seeking an academic specifically to teach Canadian Law. The successful appointee will contribute to the Faculty's teaching and research profile, engage in related professional activities and provide service support to the University. Applicants must be able to demonstrate the ability to undertake small group teaching, problem based learning, and skills based assessment practice in at least one of the following areas:

- Introduction to Canadian law
- Canadian Administrative law
- Canadian Constitutional law
- Canadian Criminal law and practice

The Faculty prides itself on its quality of teaching and professional focus and as such is looking to appoint an academic who will successfully contribute to this. We invite applications from individuals who are inspirational legal educators with an excellent academic record.

A doctoral qualification would be well regarded, but is not mandatory. Evidence of excellent communication skills as well as superior organisational and administrative skills are also required.

Initial enquiries may be directed to Professor Lee Stuesser, Director of Canadian Programs on [lstuesser@bond.edu.au](mailto:lstuesser@bond.edu.au) or +61 7 5595 2028.

For further details regarding this appointment please reference the position description and selection criteria available from [www.bond.edu.au/employ](http://www.bond.edu.au/employ).

Applications close 5.00pm, Friday, December 16, 2011



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