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*“Justice is but truth in action.”*

– Justice Louis D. Brandeis, 1914

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### **Letter-Writing Strategy**

In litigation, there is no such thing as a “casual letter.” Every letter that goes out becomes a part of the litigation and should be done with care and with strategic considerations in mind. The volume of communications taking place over the phone and via e-mail leaves little time to draft succinctly worded letters. Often we regard letter writing as an impossible luxury. [Read more »](#)



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## Advising New Landlords

By Ellen Rappaport Tanowitz

Ms. Jones calls you on the telephone to announce that she is purchasing a multifamily house in town, and she'd like you represent her in the sale. She tells you that he plans to rent the units out and that this is her first venture into being a landlord, but it does not seem hard and everyone else seems to be making a ton of money at it.

As an attorney, you've got two tasks: first, you've got to make sure your client is getting a good deal and that the real estate transaction is a sound one. Second, you've got to make sure your client is making a good investment and that he understands that being a landlord does take work.

Before closing on the property, Ms. Jones needs to consider a number of things that are outlined below.

- Does the property presently have tenants and does Ms. Jones want those tenants to remain after she purchases the property? If Ms. Jones does not want to inherit the tenants, then the tenants must be evicted before closing. Otherwise, the eviction of the tenants becomes Ms. Jones' problem, and eviction can be a lengthy and costly process.
- Is the property in conformance with all state and local health or sanitary codes? Ms. Jones should make sure that a local health inspector or representative from the housing authority inspects the premises for health and sanitary code violations so that these violations can be remedied prior to transfer of title.
- An inspection for lead paint should also be performed and, if found, its removal should be a condition precedent to closing.
- Similarly, Ms. Jones should become familiar with all the applicable codes and regulations. For example, Massachusetts not only regulates what appliances must be provided in a rental unit, but also when the heat must be turned on and the temperature range at which the unit must be maintained.
- Ms. Jones should also consider having someone from the town who handles zoning issues make an inspection. The inspection should cover whether the apartments are legal and whether activities such as home-based businesses are permitted. In addition, become familiar with the street parking rules.
- Determine whether last month's rent or a security deposit has been taken and have those monies transferred to Ms. Jones. Make certain that the previous owner did not take more in a security deposit than is permitted by statute. If so, remedy any imperfections immediately.
- Determine whether the tenants have term leases or month-to-month tenancies and when the leases are subject to renewal.
- Make certain that the tenants are notified that the landlord has changed and provide them with Ms. Jones' address. In addition, if the closing occurs at any time other than the last day of the month, be certain to address whether Ms. Jones is entitled to rent on a pro rata basis for the month.
- Ms. Jones should educate herself about the eviction process so that she understands what will have to be done should someone need to be evicted. Similarly, she should have at least a basic understanding of the landlord-tenant laws in the jurisdiction. Massachusetts prohibits discrimination in renting to all the protected classes, but it also prohibits discrimination in renting to families. Ms. Jones should understand the reasons why she can turn down a prospective tenant and what could get her in trouble.



- Ms. Jones should also become familiar with the various state-assisted housing programs, such as Section 8.
- If Ms. Jones is not handy, then she should gather a list of tradesmen who can help her out when a repair is necessary, such as licensed electricians and plumbers, a carpenter, a painter, and an all-around handyman.

If Ms. Jones does her homework, then owning investment properties can be an enjoyable and hopefully profitable endeavor.

## Which Business Retirement Plan Is Right for You?

Reported by James E. Fisher

If (like many solo or small firm legal practitioners) you run a small business, you've got no shortage of concerns: cash flow, marketing, the ebb and flow of the economy—you name it. In fact, you have so many issues to ponder, you might find it hard to take the time to choose a retirement plan for your business. And yet, it's worth the effort—because the right plan can offer the opportunity to make your life a lot easier in the days when you don't have so much to think about.

Fortunately, there's never been a better time for small-business owners to choose a good, cost-efficient retirement plan. In recent years, new tax laws have made it easier for you to pick a plan that can help you save for retirement and, if necessary, attract and retain quality employees.

The most common types of retirement plans offer tax-deferred growth of earnings, the ability to make tax-deductible contributions, and a variety of investment options. Beyond sharing these traits, though, small-business retirement accounts differ in contribution limits and other factors. Let's look at a few of these plans:



### Plans for Self-Employed (No Employees)

- **Owner-only 401(k):** When you establish an “owner-only 401(k),” you can contribute more than 25 percent of your income up to a maximum of \$45,000 in 2007. If you're 50 or older, you can even put in an extra \$5,000 to your 401(k). Plus, you can transfer most retirement plan assets—such as profit sharing and money-purchase plans—into your owner-only 401(k).
- **SEP-IRA:** For 2007, you can put in the lesser of \$45,000 or 25 percent of your compensation to your SEP-IRA. Eligible compensation is capped at \$225,000 for 2007. You can set up a SEP-IRA for your business with a minimum of paperwork. And you won't have to file any annual reports on the plan, such as the Form 5500, either.

### Plans for Business Owners with Employees

- **SIMPLE IRA:** As you can deduce from its name, a SIMPLE IRA is easy to set up and inexpensive to administer. In 2007, employees can contribute up to \$10,500 (or \$13,000 for those 50 and older) to their SIMPLE IRA. Your business is generally required to match your employees' contributions up to three percent of their salary, unless you decide to put in two percent of each eligible employee's compensation. If you choose the matching option, you can reduce the match to between one and three percent in two of every five years.
- **Safe Harbor 401(k):** By following some specific guidelines, you can set up a Safe Harbor 401(k)—a plan that offers the same features of a traditional 401(k), but without the burdensome nondiscrimination testing

required to identify excessive contributions by highly compensated employees. (Employees' contribution limits are the same as those described in the "owner-only" 401(k). ) The key benefit of the Safe Harbor 401(k) is that you, the business owner, can contribute up to the annual dollar amount (in 2007 that's \$15,500, or \$20,500 if 50 or older) regardless of how much your employees contribute.

Any of these plans can help you meet your long-term goals of saving for your retirement outside the value of your business. But to fully diversify your holdings and build even more resources, you will need to save and invest outside your retirement plan. So, meet with your investment representative and tax advisor to choose a plan that's right for you—but don't stop there. When it comes to funding your retirement, it's hard to save "too much."

*James E. Fisher is a financial advisor with Edward Jones in Manchester, Iowa.*

## The Open House: A Primer

By Shani K. Whisonant

An effective way to celebrate the grand opening of your new law office/firm is with an open house. This has been a tried-and-true method for showing off your new digs to family and friends. It can also be a useful tool for gaining clients.

Today, open houses can be used to celebrate more than law firm grand openings. Solo and small firm attorneys—who are integral parts of the community in which they practice—can celebrate many of life’s moments with open houses with clients, family members, and close friends. Birthdays, firm anniversaries, and welcome receptions for new staff provide perfect opportunities to host events, from cocktail hours to full-blown celebrations. This article will give you some tips for throwing a great event time after time, whether or not finances are an issue. It will also give some ethical rules to consider in the planning and execution of an open house.



## The Logistics

First and foremost, remember that the open house is a joyous occasion. That should be your mantra as you plan, because it is going to take work to plan the event. Depending on your financial resources, event planning experience, the time of year, the theme, and the type of event you’re throwing, you can plan anything from an intimate cocktail get-together to a large-scale event.

- **Food.** Your guests will expect to eat at your open house. A cost-effective way to feed a crowd is to cull your contacts. Regardless of your work and personal experience, you’ll likely find a family contact in catering or a link to an ambitious culinary student who will cook for the event. This is also the most cost-effective way to have food for your event; in this instance, you pay for food and materials but not labor.

This method will require more oversight and work on your part. For example, if your spouse promises to cook for the event, you might have to roll up your sleeves and help. Cost-wise, however, this is the still most effective way to cater an event.

If money is not an issue, cull your contacts to find the caterer who will cater the vision that you see for your event. Top-shelf caterers will do all of the legwork and eliminate the headache that can come with feeding a group. Caterers are also prepared to deal with the contingencies that can make amateur cooks wilt (e.g., what to do if a particular supplier backs out of an agreement at the last minute). Ask for references and negotiate price terms with the owner or a high-level manager.

Make sure to invest time to investigate potential catering companies before deciding which one to hire. Great

resources include the Better Business Bureau ([www.bbb.com](http://www.bbb.com)) and your state's licensing agency. A little planning at the beginning can help ensure a worry-free event.

- **Beverage.** For a smaller event, it's a good idea to shop around. There are wine and liquor wholesalers where you can find great deals on both nonalcoholic and alcoholic beverages. Talk to the manager! This person is often very well-versed in the ways of food and wine. They know the inventory of their warehouse, and can help you determine the beverage quantities and pairings that make your event a success. The manager might even be able to negotiate price terms for beverages that could save you plenty of money.

If you have chosen to use a caterer for the food portion of your event, that caterer can also provide both alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages in the total price of the event. If the caterer provides bartenders for your event, see if you can negotiate the labor costs for those bartenders. Regardless of whether it's explicit or not, bartenders at private events usually make great tips.

- **Theme.** Because the reasons for open houses can be incredibly varied, it is appropriate to consider having a theme for the event. Although clowns and piñatas might be a bit much, a tastefully done theme can add individuality to an open house. Because you want your event to leave a lasting impression on the attendees, a theme can bring your firm to mind the next time an attendee needs help with IRS compliance.

If money is a concern, you can create a theme from the other elements of the event (food and beverage). If your firm will focus on international business matters, you can create a theme for your open house by serving food and wines from around the world. Another great idea to add to a food and beverage theme is to have colored light bulbs or lampshades that help create a mellow, soothing ambience so that your guests can relax. Sometimes, fluorescent bulbs can take away from the overall appeal of an open house.

Where money is tight, you can also create a theme using attire. This will give guests a chance to become more involved with the theme of the party. Send out invitations with suggested attire and see how many people dress the part. Creating a theme using attire will give you great conversation starters for the entire evening.

Even if money is not a concern, be careful about the numbers of objects or decorative pieces that you use to create your theme. In this instance, hiring an event planner to create your theme is a sure bet. After consulting with you, an event planner can come up with a number of ideas to achieve the theme that you desire, without making the event tacky and outrageous.

- **Other Basic Logistical Considerations.** Some other things to consider for your open house:
  - Have your office thoroughly cleaned before you open your office doors to the public.
  - Have enough of the basics available at the party (e.g., utensils, plates, glasses, and napkins, to name a few). If you've hired experts (caterers, event planners, etc.), check their counts against your RSVP list.
  - Make sure that invitations get mailed 4–6 weeks before the event. The RSVP cutoff date should be no later than 2 weeks before the event so that you can determine the final amounts for supplies in a timely manner.
  - Split the responsibilities evenly. If you are a solo practitioner, rely on family and close friends to help pull off the event. Remember, you have a law firm to run!

## Who to Invite and How to Invite Them

This choice is determined by the circumstances of your particular firm. The square footage of your office will determine how many people you can fit. Your budget will determine how many people you can afford to feed. Your motives for having the open house will determine whether it would be better to invite only family and close friends or whether to invite family, friends, current clients, former clients, and potential clients. However, here are some basic guidelines to follow:

- If you are hosting the open house with the hope of gaining new clients, you should consider inviting current

and former clients. Suggest that they bring friends or acquaintances. Mix this group with a splash of your family and friends to create a social event to remember.

- Open your PDA and give serious consideration to all of the contacts in it. If necessary, classify your contacts into groups (e.g., A, B, C, D, E) and invite people based on their categorization until you have reached your maximum. Send out invitations early so that you have the opportunity to invite more people if former President Clinton (from your “A” list) is unavailable on the date of your event.
- Get out your stale business cards and consider inviting that big firm attorney that you met at the ABA Annual Meeting in Honolulu. You never know what might come of it.
- Contact your undergraduate and law school’s alumni associations (usually private organizations) and their alumni development offices. These are valuable resources that are often underutilized by alumni. Some alumni development offices will even assist you with invitations for your event.
- Consider inviting your former coworkers and bosses. They are familiar with your work ethic and may be willing to send you business once they see that you have an established office.

In reality, it is not likely that you will be able to invite all of the people that you would like to see at your open house. Send announcements to the people that you cannot invite to your event. Most of them will appreciate getting the word about your new law firm.

Once your list is done, you must figure out how to invite your guests. You can choose from electronic invitations (through services like evite.com) or from traditional invitations. The Internet is becoming a more acceptable choice for invitations, but you should understand that improved firewall and spam filters could unceremoniously shove your electronic invitation into the trash and not into the intended recipient’s inbox. Pricing for invitations varies widely; check your local stationery stores for high-end paper invitations, or stores like Target or Wal-Mart for a more cost-conscious option.

## **Ethical Considerations**

There are four ABA model rules that generally apply to law firm open houses. As with any ethical issue, it is best to err on the side of caution when you are unsure about the rules. For more specific guidance on the rules in your jurisdiction, consult your state bar association.

Three of the four ABA model rules addressed in this article deal directly with the invitations that you send to your invitees. Rule 7.1 states that lawyers may not make false or misleading communication about the lawyer or the lawyer’s services. If you are including brief synopses of your firm or your attorneys with your invitation, triple check to make sure that the information you send is accurate. This applies to both the attorneys as individuals and to the firm as a whole.

Rule 7.3 discusses direct contact with prospective clients. It is okay to send paper or electronic invitations to prospective clients, but if your primary motive is gain clients from your open house, it would be good practice to include the words “Advertising Materials” on the outside of a paper envelope or at the beginning and end of any electronic communication. Check state rules to see whether it is permissible to contact potential clients by telephone. However, this is likely a sanction waiting to happen.

Rule 7.5 addresses firm names and letterhead, and is mostly applicable for those of you in an office sharing situation who want to cohost an open house. The rule states that you may “state or imply that you are in a partnership *only when that is the fact*” (emphasis added). This means that if two firms want to cohost an event, each firm name should be listed on the invitation so that potential clients cannot be confused about a partnership where none exists.

Example:

The Law Office of A.B. Ceedee, PLLC  
And  
The X.Y. Zee Law Firm, P.A.

Cordially invite you to celebrate the opening of the  
Two law firms with a cocktail reception  
At 23 Main Street, Anytown, USA,  
On March 16, 2007, from 5:30–8:00 p.m.

This invitation clearly states that the firms are individual entities that are not in partnership in any way.

Avoid this:

Law Offices

A.B. Ceedee  
X.Y. Zee

Cordially invite you to a cocktail reception  
At 23 Main Street, Anytown, USA,  
On March 16, 2007, from 5:30–8:00 p.m.

The above invitation could be very easily confused by a potential client, and could get both Ceedee and Zee into a lot of trouble with their state ethics board.

Finally, Rule 1.8 discusses responsibilities regarding law-related services. This applies to the conversations that you have at an open house. In conversations with potential clients at your office, be sure to qualify any legal-sounding information that escapes your lips. Rule 1.8 mandates that attorneys assure the potential client that the legal-sounding dialogue was 1) not a legal service and that 2) no lawyer-client privilege exists. It would be okay, however, to encourage the potential client to call your office during business hours to schedule a consultation. Be sure to check local rules for specific guidelines on how to deal with these conversations.

## **Finally . . .**

Once the preparations have been made, enjoy yourself. An open house is a social event, and stressing about minor issues does not give potential and actual clients an impression that they should seek your representation. Mingle with guests. Get them to discuss anything but their legal problems. Introduce them to each other and help them build their contacts. You worked hard to make this vision a reality, so enjoy the vino and get to know the intimates that you have invited to your law office.

Good Luck!

*Shani K. Whisonant is a Maryland attorney. Her practice areas include education law, labor and employment law, and litigation. For further advice on office party organization, she can be reached at shani.whisonant@gmail.com.*

## A Great Summer Opportunity: Judicial Clerkships

By Quentin L. Marlin

Many law students enter law school knowing exactly what it is they want to do, while others have no clue. One way to figure out what type of law you may want to practice is to try to get a job during the summer in your practice area of interest. However, many law students find it difficult to obtain their dream job after their first year of law school. Many second-year students have found work, and employers prefer to hire students with more experience. A great untapped source of summer employment for many first- and second-year students can be found in judicial clerkships.

When I began law school a couple of years ago, I had my mind made up that I wanted to become a prosecutor. I worked for the United States attorney's office in my hometown while I was in college, and I found the work to be very exciting. I worked in the criminal section of the office and was involved in complex cases from the beginning of the investigative process until adjudication. The real-life experiences of seeing a case after it was indicted, becoming involved in listening to wiretaps and raids on homes, and hunting for international fugitives added to the excitement I felt upon entering the legal profession. I was ninety-nine percent sure I wanted to become a prosecutor.



After entering law school, becoming an officer in the Mercer Association of Prosecutors, and attending several events where prosecutors spoke to our group, I was still enthusiastic about prosecuting. As that first semester passed, I began thinking about what I wanted to do regarding a summer job. I thought about interning for a district attorney's office or interning in Washington, D.C., on Capitol Hill for the House Judiciary Committee. A few months later a third option manifested. At a party for my mother, one of my parents' friends asked me if I would like to work for him that summer. He is a superior court judge in my hometown of Savannah, Georgia. I let him know that I would consider it.

As the spring semester came to a close I decided to take the judge up on his offer. I figured I would be able to earn some valuable experience, see some friends who were also home for the summer, and save money by staying with my parents.

My first day on the job was uneventful. It was basically the same as the first time you enter any situation where you don't know anyone. I was the new guy, but the judge's assistant made me feel welcome right away. The judge was on the bench when I arrived, and his staff attorney was in her office. When I met the judge's staff attorney, I began to feel even more comfortable about my summer internship. She had recently graduated from my law school, and that fact provided a basis for us to get to know each other.

After the judge got off the bench, I went to his chambers to talk with him. Our conversation focused on my first year of law school. He then took me around to meet the other superior, state, and magistrate court judges. I spent a few minutes speaking with each judge before heading back to my judge's chamber. After a few minutes I returned to the staff attorney's office to receive my first assignment. It was a property case involving a building in downtown Savannah. I had hated property class during my first semester and was not very excited about receiving a property case. However, I was pleasantly surprised that I was able to answer all the issues asked of me, and I actually enjoyed researching property law.

I continued to receive civil assignments every few days. In addition to working on civil cases, I was sitting in court to watch criminal, domestic, and a range of civil hearings. I also was able to sit in on hearings in chambers in several cases. I thoroughly enjoyed being able to sit in on different cases, and also being able to participate when the judge and his staff attorney would bounce around ideas. This really made me feel as though I was a part of the team.

As the summer went on I was continually given more responsibility on cases. I eventually was given a case in which a decision had to be made as to whether a summary judgment motion should be granted. It was a civil case with three claims. The first claim was for breach of employment contract, the second was for tortious interference with business relations, and the third was for slander. I spent a lot of time conducting research on the case, and, prior to finalizing the order, the judge set the case down for oral argument. This was also an interesting experience.

Following the oral argument I completed the order and came to the conclusion that summary judgment should be granted on all three claims. The judge's staff attorney reviewed my work, agreed with my conclusions, and pointed out some minor grammatical and stylistic corrections. Following the corrections, I presented the order to the judge. He also pointed out some stylistic changes, but agreed with the conclusion of the order. The following April the Georgia Court of Appeals affirmed my order.

My experience clerking for a trial court judge really changed my opinion of a civil practice. I had never done any work in civil law, and I unexpectedly worked on civil cases all summer and loved it. Each case I worked on that summer was very different. While I was still exposed to criminal law, I dealt with civil matters in a more in-depth manner. I no longer felt as though I was tied to criminal law as a future practice area. When I headed back to school that August and began thinking about work for the next summer, I sent out resumes to several civil firms in Savannah.

Not only did my work with the judge add to my resume, but it also became a great conversation topic in my interviews. Due to my work with a judge in the same city I planned to work, I definitely increased my chances of obtaining a position at these firms for the summer. I learned several times while at call-back interviews that the judge's staff attorney had personally called to firms I was interviewing with in order to provide her recommendation. After several interviews I had the opportunity to split the next summer with several great law firms, and I decided upon two firms to work at the following summer. I subsequently accepted an offer from one of those firms for an associate position after law school.

My work with the judge not only provided me with great experience and a great reference on my resume, but also allowed me to meet great friends. I still keep in touch with all of the superior court staff attorneys and the judge I worked for. I know all the judges in the city I will practice in. These are invaluable resources to know personally, and will certainly be beneficial in my practice. I recommend that any law student looking for summer work definitely consider working for a judge.

*Quentin Marlin is a 2007 graduate of Mercer University School of Law. While at Mercer, Quentin served on the Student Bar Association as a Second and Third Year Representative, American Bar Association Liaison to GP/Solo, and Treasurer of the Christian Legal Society for two years. Quentin obtained valuable work experience during his summers at Mercer, clerking for a superior court judge his first year and splitting his second summer with two law firms. Quentin will be returning to one of those firms, Ellis, Painter, Ratterree & Adams LLP, to begin his legal career. In his free time Quentin enjoys flying small aircraft and playing sports.*



## The Balancing Act: How I Almost Moved to Detroit

By Ellen Rappaport Tanowitz

Back in September, I received an excited call from my husband, who reported to me that a large company wanted him to come and interview for a great job. “Great,” I said, “And where is the job?” thinking he’d say New York. “Detroit,” he said. “Detroit?” I replied. “Well, that is where their corporate headquarters are located.”

OK. Now, before everyone from Michigan starts sending me nasty emails, let me be clear—it was not Detroit per se that I was stunned by. It was the prospect of moving somewhere where I knew not a soul, of giving up my law practice, and moving somewhere entirely new. At least I could waive into the bar.

We discussed it and decided it was the job opportunity of a lifetime. He analogized it to me like this—imagine that you filed a brief in court and suddenly Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s secretary calls you up and says, “Ellen, we really liked that brief you filed

in the Jones v. Smith case. Why don’t you come down and interview for a clerkship with the justice?” OK, hard to argue with that sort of invitation to interview.

But as time passed, and my business really started to take off, I questioned what we would do if he actually got the job. Could I really give up my law practice and move half way across the country? How would I shut down my present practice? Could I take any clients with me? Would I really just stay home (with this job, we could afford that luxury), or would I go crazy if I tried to do so? How could I deny him the career opportunity of a lifetime? Surely, I did not want to spend the rest of my life hearing “Well, if I’d only taken that job. . .” But, at the same time, what about my career? I’ve been in practice for myself just about five years, and it is finally starting to pay off. I am getting referrals and repeat business. How do I leave all that I have worked for?

So, what do you do when you have a two career family and both careers are important and going somewhere? Whose job should take precedence? Or do you do what our recently elected governor and his wife did—he traveled wherever the job required; she stayed in Massachusetts working as a lawyer at one of the biggest firms in town? And if you do that, what does it do to your marriage and how will it affect your kids?

I was getting a headache just thinking about it.

After months of waiting and a few anxiety-ridden days, we learned that he did not get the job, so we did not have to make the decision.

And fortunately, this story has a happy ending on both sides. My husband got a promotion at work, which puts

him into the position he had been looking for. My business continues to prosper and grow, so we've finally made a decision we both like—we're not going anywhere.

## Legal Trivia

As of 2005, how many states elected their judges?

**Answer:** Thirty-one states.



## GP|Solo Division Notes:



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- Popular Topics on Solosez

Note: Information on all this and more can be found on our Website at <http://www.abanet.org/genpractice>.

## GP|Solo 2007 Spring Meeting



**[GP|Solo Division 2007 Spring Meeting](#)**  
**The Washington Court Hotel, Washington, DC**  
**May 10 – 13, 2007**

The meeting will be held at the [Washington Court Hotel](#) in Washington, DC on **May 10 – 13, 2007**. The three-day meeting kicks off on Thursday evening with the Opening Ceremony, including a [Swearing-in Ceremony](#) and Welcome Reception at the United States Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces. In addition to the various governance committee meetings that will be held throughout the three days, the Division is offering tours of Capitol Hill and the White House. Please join us for an eventful 2007 Meeting in the nation's capital!

- › View the [GP|Solo Spring Meeting 2007 Homepage](#)
- › Register now at the [ABA Meetings Website!](#)

## Spring Schedule At-a-Glance

### *Thursday, May 10th*

- Swearing in Ceremony and Welcome Reception at the United States Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces. This event is included in your registration fee.

### *Friday, May 11th*

- Capitol Hill Tour
- GP|Solo Sponsor “Thank You” Cocktail Reception
- Solo and Small Firm Awards Dinner to be held at the [Washington Court Hotel](#). Ticket Price is \$75

### *Saturday, May 12th*

- Division Council Meeting
- White House Tour

## Swearing-In Ceremony at the 2007 Spring Meeting

The Opening Session of the GP|Solo 2007 Spring Meeting will include Swearing-in Ceremonies for both the Supreme Court of the United States and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces.

**The deadline for applications to the U.S. Supreme Court is April 2, 2007. The deadline for applications to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces is April 18, 2007** (*Note: Civilian attorneys are encouraged to apply for admission to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces.*). The Swearing-In Ceremonies will be held on **Thursday, May 10, 2007, 4:00 p.m.**, at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces, 450 E. Street, NW, Washington, DC 20442-0001. Appropriate dress is Business Attire or Military Uniform with Blouse and Tie.

☞ Learn more about the [Swearing-In Ceremony](#)

## 2007 Solo & Small Firm Award Winners Announced



The Division is pleased to announce the winners of its 2007 [Solo & Small Firm Awards](#)! The awards recognize dedication to the practice of law as general practitioners or solo or small firm lawyers. Recipients will be honored at the Division’s 2007 Spring Meeting Awards Dinner in Washington, DC on May 11, 2007.

### **Solo and Small Firm Lifetime Achievement Award**

***Charles J. Driebe***

*Jonesboro, GA*

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### **Solo and Small Firm Project Award**

***Lake County Bar Association – Judge Ted Klammer***

*Lake County Ohio Probate Court*

*(Third Annual Probate and Mental Health Conference)*

## Solo and Small Firm Trainer Award

***Bruce L. Dorner***

*Londonderry, NH*

## Apply Now for Diversity and Young Lawyer Fellowships

GP|Solo is still accepting applications for its Fellowship Programs within the [Diversity Committee](#) and the [Young Lawyers Committee](#) until April 30, 2007.

- › » Learn more about the [Diversity Fellows Program](#)
- › » Learn more about the [Young Lawyers Fellowship](#)

## Listen to ABA Executive Director Hank White's Speech Online



### A GP|Solo Online Exclusive!

Did you miss the Midyear Meeting last month in Miami? Well, we may not be able to provide the Florida sunshine, but GP|Solo is offering one souvenir from the Meeting. Now you can download ABA Executive Director Hank White's speech, given at the Military Law Luncheon during the ABA 2007 Midyear Meeting.

[Hank White Speech \(Feb 9, 2007\)](#)

## GP|Solo Members Review New Software

In keeping with this year's GP|Solo slogan — **DO Something!** — several Division members have been at work reviewing useful new technology that may be helpful to attorneys in their practices or in their daily lives. **Bruce Dorner** has recently reviewed the new software [Acrobat 8.0 from Adobe](#) for *Lawyers USA* magazine. *Lawyers USA* has made this article available online, exclusively for GP|Solo members:

[Adobe Acrobat 8.0 Review in \*Lawyers USA\*](#)

And look out for the upcoming issue of [GPSOLO magazine's](#) "Technology & Practice Guide," featuring a review of Adobe's new software offering from two sides: Mac vs PC. The piece is by member **Jeffrey M. Allen** and **David Masters**.

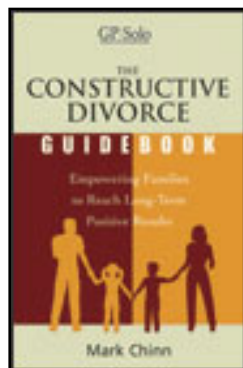
## Solo Lawyers Featured in LPM's *Law Practice Magazine*



The January/February 2007 issue of *Law Practice* magazine, published by the [Law Practice Management Section](#) of the ABA, was dedicated to solo lawyers. The magazine is currently available online:

[Law Practice Magazine](#)

## GP|Solo Book Spotlight — *The Constructive Divorce Guidebook*



### [The Constructive Divorce Guidebook: Empowering Families to Reach Long-Term Positive Results](#)

Read this book and learn how to help your clients to resolve family disputes in a manner that will lead to long-term results for the families and children of divorce as well as:

- Develop techniques for eliminating or deflecting negative tactics
- Create a framework within which both sides to a dispute feel safe resolving conflicts without damaging the other party
- Maintain civility toward opposing counsel, parties, staff, members of the court system, and third parties affected by the dispute
- Examine alternative dispute resolution and negotiation tactics and methods that lead to "win-win" solutions and encourage the use of the values and principles learned in our various faiths, which can and should be woven into the fabric of our problem solving
- Adopt law practice management methods for the preparation of mediations, trials, and negotiation, which foster civil and courteous conduct
- Implement behavior analysis and modification for lawyers and others involved in the process

Price: \$54.95

**GP|Solo members: \$44.95**

› ✂ Find out about other GP|Solo books at [our bookstore](#).

**Popular Topics on Solosez**

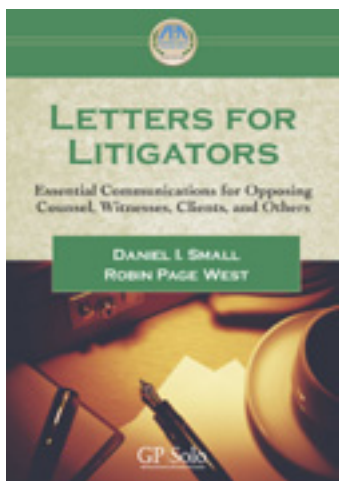
[Solosez](#) is an email discussion list for solo and small firm lawyers that has grown to be by far the ABA's busiest list.

For a taste of what Solosez has to offer, check out the [popular threads](#) on Solosez's Website. Recent threads include:

- Recommendations for a Color Laser Printer
- Phrases That Make You Flinch (Water Cooler)
- Your First Client
- Home Office Lawyer Blues



## Excerpted from [Letters for Litigators: Essential Communications for Opposing Counsel, Witnesses, Clients, and Others](#)



Letters and pleadings give structure and flow to a litigator's practice. Just as we pursue our clients' goals through the effective and judicious use of pleadings and motions, so too can we use letters to define and pursue our goals; to communicate those goals to our opposing counsel, clients, and staff; and to measure whether we are attaining them in a timely fashion.

The volume of communications taking place over the phone and via e-mail leaves little time to draft succinctly worded letters. Often we regard them as an impossible luxury. As nice as it would be to document the file, confirm with opposing counsel, and apprise the client of your two phone conversations and four e-mails this morning, there isn't time to put it down on paper before you leave for court this afternoon. Do you keep the information in your head and try to remember to do a letter later? Do you reluctantly forward the e-mails to the client but wonder whether the casual tone and the pleasantries you are sharing with adverse counsel might seem a tad glib to the client?

In litigation, there is no such thing as a "casual letter." Every letter that goes out becomes part of the litigation and should be done with care and with strategic considerations in mind. These may include the following:

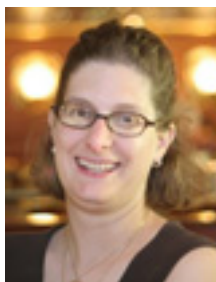
- When in doubt, write it out.
- Be clear.
- Be relentlessly polite.
- Leave the ball in their court.
- Don't overstate.

By Daniel I. Small and Robin Page West  
ABA General Practice, Solo and Small Firm Division

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**[General Practice, Solo and Small Firm Division](#)**