Program Description:
Raising non-dues revenue is essential to a Section’s sustainability. Section leaders discuss identifying new revenue sources and building and growing a successful sponsorship program.

Speakers:
Steven H. Brose, Delegate, Infrastructure & Regulated Industries Section
Adrienne D. Dresevic, Budget Officer-Elect, Health Law Section
Gary B. Eidelman, Budget & Finance Committee Vice-Chair, Section of Labor & Employment Law

Moderator:
Julie A. Totten, Council Member, Section of Labor & Employment Law

Reporter:
Jennifer Michel, Associate Director, Tort Trial & Insurance Practice Section

Totten welcomed attendees, introduced the above panel and reported that the program’s goal was to serve as an interactive session. The panel will focus on CLE sponsorship, overall section sponsorship, partnerships and a catch-all of other hot sponsorship-related topics.

Totten asked Dresevic to expand upon her sponsorship delegation and responsibilities within her section, Health Law. Dresevic reported that Health Law’s sponsorship committee’s active role greatly assists the section’s overall financial status. The committee focuses on interest groups and connecting partners/vendors with the appropriate best-fit.

Totten asked Brose to expand upon sponsorship delegation and responsibilities within his section, Infrastructure & Regulated Industries. Brose reported that I & R I, unlike Health Law, relies on active members of leadership to address sponsorship needs, but has no dedicated committee for the purpose.

Totten asked Eidelman to expand upon sponsorship delegation and responsibilities within his section, Labor & Employment Law. Eidelman reported that they have several key sponsorship vice-chair-esque roles on each committee, in which the individual is responsible for sponsor solicitation.
Eidelman touched upon various aspects of sponsorship driven revenue through CLE programs. Labor and Employment Law offers sponsorship benefits including logo recognition printed on save-the-date conference materials, ads within brochures (size dependent upon the amount), and other options. Recent challenges include the concept of bundling packages from meeting to meeting and how to become strategic about the when/why of the ask.

Brose commented on the attendance struggle of in-person conferences. Webinars are far more well-attended by Infrastructure & Regulated Industries Section members due to their easy on-demand access. Sponsors have shown interest in participation as speakers.

Dresevic confirmed that Health Law’s three major section conferences historically attracts $170K in meeting sponsorships, a total of 12% of the group’s operating budget. The section also places emphasis on leader buy-in: those planning a program should commit as a firm sponsor themselves. Dresevic also confirmed that section sponsors result in an additional $125K in sponsorship and noted that benefits for such can vary. Many are interested in liaison representative positions within committees or interest groups. Others are interested in more specific opportunities including private lunches with targeted leadership, webinar speaking roles, content development, etc. Dresevic encouraged attendees to address ideal engagement while developing a core relationship with potential sponsors.

Brose spoke of the challenges many sections face. Mutual interest is key. A sponsor must have genuine interest in developing key relationships with the section, as there is often work involved on their end as well.

Eidelman spoke of the conversion process when courting a vendor to become a sponsor. Traditionally, consultants and court reports have been challenging to commit. Firms have become increasingly competitive in terms of logo recognition and this has eased the burden of non-committal corporate vendors.

Dresevic reminded the group that the keys to sponsorship start with leadership and should focus on partnering opportunities. The Health Law Officers recently attended a targeted conference for the purpose of showing support to a potential sponsor. Genuine interest tends to take away the “sale-sy” feel.

Attendees held an open discussion about exclusivity and the value of focus groups. Eidelman encouraged sections to move away from “Type A” thinking and be creative. Consider asking a past speaker to sponsor; they already know the value of a program and won’t be as concerned with an ROI.

Dresevic spoke of Health Law’s “Hack-a-thon” which involved 10-12 teams of leadership who broke apart to strategize about non-dues revenue. Each team presented ideas after brainstorming for an hour. Sponsors judged leadership teams in the competition and felt engaged and more importantly, invested in the section itself.

Totten thanked all attendees for their attention and encouraged them to reach out to the panel for post-program discussion.