

February 2008

## From the Chair

### Contents

- [From the Chair](#)
- [Editor's Note](#)
- [Law Practice Survey](#)
- [Site Watch](#)
- [PMRC](#)

[Announcements](#)

### Section Links

- [LPM Website](#)
- [Officers and Council](#)

### Bar Links

- [SBM Website](#)
- [PMRC](#)
- [Calendar of Events](#)
- [Public Policy Updates](#)

### February Focus

[Economics of Law  
Practice Survey  
Results](#)

[Craigslist.org](#)

[PMRC Announcement  
List](#)

Well, it is my turn to take charge of the Law Practice Management Section as chair through next September, and I look forward to working with the council and section members as we move forward. The general membership for the State Bar of Michigan exceeds 38,000 members. Of those members, only about 5% or 2,000 are members of the LPM Section. Since membership in the sections is voluntary, I see the cup as being half full. However, as I speak with lawyers from around Michigan about our challenged economy, I view that cup as half empty.

Since LPM is not a section that relates to a specific substantive area of the law, it would seem that it should benefit anyone who practices law. We should be able to provide assistance to make you more efficient, and in these tough economic times, more profitable. Why we don't reach the 36,000 members of the Bar who aren't members of this section would be best answered by those individuals. I can only postulate reasons.

I asked LPM Council members to consider initiatives for the coming year—initiatives which will foster greater demand for membership due to the benefits we provide. To begin that dialogue, we need to understand who are members and who are not.

As I review the statistics, it becomes apparent that our section is younger than the general Bar membership—almost 75% of our members were born after 1961, whereas only 40% of the general membership was born after 1961. It could be that the more mature attorneys feel that they have figured out how to be efficient and profitable. On the other hand, maybe the younger generation perceives greater value to associate with LPM as they understand what they are up against—competing with established practitioners (or maybe not).

The answer could lie in the fact that we offer free membership in the first year to newly admitted attorneys, and that skews the statistics. In any event, I am looking for ways to enhance our value to the Bar and to do it in a way that is significant. One approach is to make presentations to students in their third year of law school concerning the practical implications of practicing law as a business model. Too few of them consider the economics of legal practice, to their own detriment as well as their employers and clients. An efficient and organized model of practice benefits everyone—the client, opposing counsel, the courts. Too often we see attorneys who appear in court with stacks of files and very limited preparation. Professionalism starts with good habits of effective time management and organizational skills. I would also like to see more training and support for new practitioners in that area to get them on the road to a productive and satisfying career.

What do you think? I am interested in hearing from the general membership for ideas. We are also looking for individuals who wish to be active and participate as LPM council members.

Gary P. Bauer  
Chair, Law Practice Management Section

## Editor's Note

This edition of the Law Practice Management Section newsletter is the first in digital format. We hope that it has reached you in a form that makes it easier to utilize. We know that it won't take any space on your desk, but it might be a little more difficult to use. We also know that this format is going to be far less expensive to produce and distribute than the hard copy format used in the past.

We would appreciate any comments or suggestions that you might have to make the newsletter more valuable to you. We would also like to receive articles for publication that you think would be of interest to section members. You can e-mail them to me at the e-mail address provided at the end of this note.

We want to thank Joan Bullock for her service as the editor of the newsletter. We hope that we can provide a newsletter of the quality of those provided by Joan. Her job as a professor at Florida A&M Law School has made it difficult for her to spend the time necessary to edit the section's newsletter. Again, thanks Joan, and we will do our best to meet your standards.

Ernie Gifford

[egifford@patlaw.com](mailto:egifford@patlaw.com)

## Law Practice Economic Survey is a Powerful Practice Management Tool

By Vincent A. Romano

The new Economics of Law Practice Survey is a revolutionary development in practice management tools for Michigan lawyers. It is a free service and is available 24/7 by logging onto the survey website at [www.lawpracticeeconomics.com](http://www.lawpracticeeconomics.com).

The survey delivers timely, relevant, and accurate information to inform and guide your practice management decisions. It monitors and reports on:

- Attorney income
- Hourly billing rates for attorneys and legal assistants
- Overhead expenses and management practices
- Staff compensation, incentive pay, and benefits
- Current State Bar of Michigan membership demographics and geographic distribution
- Time allocated to billable and non-billable professional activities
- Perceptions on economic circumstances involving the practice of law

One of the most helpful aspects of the database is the ability to select and filter the data on any or all of the following criteria:

- Work classification
- Field of practice
- Office location

The survey results can also be viewed as ready-to-use charts, tables, and graphs.

Traditionally, the survey had been conducted every three years in a paper format. Leading up to the 2007 survey, State Bar staffers and section volunteers—after an arduous selection process—chose Synergy Management Solutions as the survey provider. The staffers, volunteers, and Synergy personnel worked diligently to develop an annual survey in an online format that is now being used.

The data is gathered during a set time each year. That time is announced in various State Bar media, including the *e-Journal*, e-mail blasts, and the print *Michigan Bar Journal*. The data from the 2007 survey is now available.

The Law Practice Management Section is proud to have sponsored the survey since its inception in 1981. The section's involvement with the survey is believed to be the oldest member benefit continuously provided by any State Bar Section.

## Site Watch

You may have already heard of [Craigslist](http://www.craigslist.com), but if not, it is a website that you might want to take a look at.

It is essentially the "want ad" website of the Internet, but it is much larger in terms of users and content than the want ads of any major newspaper in the world. It was started in 1995 as a website where postings of social events of interest to people in the San Francisco area could be made free of charge.

It has grown since then to much beyond its beginnings. People soon began to use it for postings other than social events, and the website accommodated those postings by adding new categories. One of the first to be added was a category for jobs for those looking for employment and for those looking to hire others. It was used primarily by computer people from Silicon Valley and so, in its early stages, the jobs were primarily for people with technical skills.

The website has grown, and it now lists numerous categories other than jobs and is available for posting in 450 cities in 50 countries, with each of the 450 cities having its own advertisements. There are separate editions in Michigan for Ann Arbor, the Detroit area, Flint, Grand Rapids, and Saginaw/Bay City, where you can find postings for those particular cities and areas. Other cities in Michigan and elsewhere are constantly being added and can be added by a user if he/she is not satisfied with the cities already listed.

There are categories for housing, items for sale, services (including legal services), jobs, gigs, and even personals. Because in the beginning there was no censorship, and even now there is very little, the personal ads have led to some difficulties with authorities. There are discussion forums, including one with the title "legal." Some of the discussion groups are directed to topics other than those you will find in a reputable newspaper.

Posting an ad is easy, and for most ads, free. The only exception is that \$25 is charged to post job openings in New York and Los Angeles.

The site now has 9 billion hits and 30 million new ads per month.

Take a look at [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org).

Ernie Gifford  
Gifford, Krass, Sprinkle, Anderson & Citkowski P.C.

## **PMRC Opt-In Announcement List**

Stay up to date with Practice Management Resource Center low-cost seminars and technical educational opportunities by receiving e-messages specific to PMRC seminars. [Sign Up Now](#)