

Charlotte Business Journal - April 15, 2010

http://charlotte.bizjournals.com/charlotte/blog/2010/04/standing_out_in_a_down_economy.html

CHARLOTTE BUSINESS JOURNAL

Blog: The Charlotte Blog

Ari Kaplan Notes Ways Law Students Can Stand Out In A Down Economy

Will Boye
Staff Writer



Thursday, April 15, 2010, 10:55am EDT | Modified: Thursday, April 15, 2010, 11:20am

Lawyer, author and speaker [Ari Kaplan](#) spoke at the Charlotte School of Law yesterday on how law students can stand out in one of the worst job markets in years.

Kaplan was a commercial litigator at McDermott Will & Emery before leaving in 2006. In 2008, he published his [book](#), *The Opportunity Maker: Strategies for Inspiring Your Legal Career Through Creative Networking and Business Development*. He frequently speaks on how professionals can promote themselves organically and build genuine relationships at a time when jobs are scarce.

Kaplan also recently released a report, titled "The Evolution of the Legal Profession," that addresses where the legal industry is heading.

I spoke with him yesterday, and here are a few excerpts:

So how do you stand out in a down economy?

I'm really committed to providing people with action-oriented ideas. So I just suggest to students that they make a list of the people they'd like to meet. One great idea that I really like is writing a guest blog post. A lot of people blog, but a lot of people don't. I suggest that you use a sample post. So, for example, if I am a student and I'm interested in employment law, then I would do a search (for an employment law blog). So I don't have to be a blogger to e-mail the owner of that blog and do a guest post and interview a prominent employment lawyer in whatever town I'm in, or the in-house counsel for employment law at one of the big companies. And the goal is to associate yourself with a topic and with an individual. So you are now connected, and what's great is you've done it in a way that is very effective. You've contacted this person not for yourself, not "here's my résumé," but "I would love to include you in this post that I'm doing to showcase your talent and ability." That's what people are much more responsive to in a down market. But what happens is it creates a relationship. You're doing something for them, and so they naturally will ask about you and what are you interested in. It sets the foundation for a sincere, organic relationship.



Ari Kaplan

There must be a lot of interest in tips like these right now.

The market has fueled much greater interest in these topics, and my goal is to shift the mindset a little bit. My philosophy is that self-promotion has nothing to do with promoting yourself. It really has everything to do with promoting the success and good work of other people and having that reflect back on your character. If you can find ways to do that, you will be able to create opportunity. What's interesting is that few people are thinking in that fashion. Those who do, those are the people that end up becoming rainmakers at firms. Not because of their pedigree or because of how they did at school. Often it's how they're interacting with people, assuming they showcase some talent for the work that they're doing. There are lots of talented lawyers that aren't achieving that rainmaker status.

Do you have advice for Charlotte School of Law students in particular? The school is relatively new and is still developing a brand.

I've spoken at newer law schools where there's not a deep pool of alumni, but I want students to recognize — and we all forget this — that there's an entire pool of your collegiate alumni, many of whom are legal professionals. I often suggest that students find a way to host an event. When you're the host of something, you're seen as the leader, which is why grouping on social media sites has become successful or owning a blog. It's not because that tool necessarily has so much greater penetration into the market. It's a sign of leadership. You've created something, and you're using that as a vehicle to marshal information and personalities. For students at newer schools, I often suggest that they look deeper into their college relationships and where those relationships have gone. That alumni connection is just as strong, and people shouldn't forget that. I am so committed to the idea that there is a way for each individual to customize how to do these things suited to his or her personality, scholastic aptitude and region. There's no one way, but there is certainly a way for everyone.

What was your main takeaway from this report on the legal profession?

That the legal industry is heading toward a culture of value and efficiency, and that it needs to renew its focus on culture in terms of training and development and nurturing of young talent. But in a way that allows them to provide services that are value-driven and that are efficient and that are not necessarily just based on time. Because that has been part of what has changed things. If you're just racking up hours, the clients are not appreciative of that effort and it's not necessarily showcasing your full range of capabilities. It's just saying,

"This is how long it took us" as opposed to "these are the results." So it's become much more results-driven, and clients will pay a premium for good results. So it's just a matter of measuring what lawyers are doing in a different way. It doesn't necessarily mean that there will be any drop in revenue. It just means the revenue won't be based necessarily on time in. It will be based on performance and meeting certain preset goals and predefined conditions for how a project might look.

Categories: [Human Resources](#), [Legal Services](#)

Tags: [career development](#), [job seeking](#), [law firms](#), [law schools](#), [networking](#)

Companies: [Charlotte School of Law](#), [McDermott Will & Emery](#)

People: [Ari Kaplan](#)

All contents of this site © American City Business Journals Inc. All rights reserved.