Resources For Attorneys

In Hard Times

With today's economy on the skids, solo and small firm practitioners are looking for more ways than ever to tighten their belts. **Philip Mack Furlow**, chair of the State Bar's Law Practice Management Committee, acknowledges that many solo and small firm practitioners are increasingly concerned about the economy and its effect on their practice. "Cost is becoming more and more of an issue. Attorneys are looking for ways to get CLE without having to travel," he says. In response, he says the State Bar's CLE department is looking to offer more webcast topics.

Many Texas solo and small firm attorneys, like **Brent C. Perry**, are being proactive. Perry says even the smallest changes can make a big difference. "I am increasingly using email and e-filing to cut costs and be more time-efficient," says the Houston sole practitioner. "I am scanning everything to make file maintenance easier and cheaper. My overhead is very, very low."

From county law libraries to benefits and programs offered through the State Bar of Texas, there are many ways for solos and small firm practitioners to save money, and, more important, to continue providing the best service to clients.

State Bar of Texas Insurance Trust

It's important to stay healthy, even in a bum economy. If you are uninsured and you think that health insurance has to take a backseat to other pressing needs (or are insured and want to search for better rates), look into the State Bar of Texas Insurance Trust (**www.sbotit.com**). For more than 60 years, the Insurance Trust has worked to ensure that State Bar members, from law students to 50-

year lawyers, as well as employees of law firms have

access to competitive, personalized, and quality life and health insurance options. The Insurance Trust, through its wholly owned subsidiary, SBIT Insurance Agency, provides quotes through several major insurance carriers for guaranteed issue health insurance. This means that all employees of small Texas firms (2–50 attorneys/employees) are eligible for health insurance coverage — with no requirement to provide evidence of good health.

Illustration by Gilberto Sauceda

592 Texas Bar Journal • July 2009 www.texasbar.com

Legal Research

An abundance of free legal research is right at your fingertips. Aside from taking advantage of the research materials available at your county's legal library, Casemaker 2.1 is available to State Bar members free of charge. The legal research service has been expanded to include all 50 states and many federal courts and can be accessed through the State Bar website (www.texasbar.com) under "My Bar Page" and also on www.texasbarcle.com.

Law Practice Management

The State Bar's Law Practice Management Program offers a variety of programs to help you run your practice more efficiently. From how-to guides to a resource library to an online self-assessment tool, the LPM website (www.texasbarcle.com/CLE/LMHome.asp) offers a number of free resources on maintaining your practice. LPM also offers monthly webcasts and a yearly CLE course that features topics on various law practice management subjects. To find out more about those, visit the LPM website. For more information, call (800)204-2222, ext. 1300 or (512)427-1300.

Stress, Depression, or Substance Abuse

It's not easy being on your own in this economy. From financial strains to family responsibilities, stress may feel unmanageable at this point. But there is help. The Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program is available free to lawyers (and law students) who may have substance abuse problems or mental health issues. Those who may feel overwhelmed can call TLAP's confidential toll-free hotline at (800)343-8527 any day, any time. A special hotline is available for judges at (800)219-6474. For more information, visit www.texasbar.com/tlap.

At Your Service

The Texas Legal Protection Plan (TLPP) is a comprehensive legal insurance plan created and endorsed by the State Bar of Texas. The economy has affected many businesses over the past year, including the legal profession. One way for attorneys to mitigate the effects of the economy is to join TLPP. Participating TLPP

attorneys benefit by quick payment of claims and expansion of their practice. TLPP is expanding its website to include a searchable attorney database, making it easier for participants to find practicing attorneys throughout the state. To participate in the plan, you must be a State Bar member in good standing, maintain professional liability coverage, and sign a contract with TLPP stating you will provide prompt, professional service to plan members. Contact mpoole@tlpp.org to join the panel. To find out more about the plan, visit www.tlpp.org or call (800)252-9346 or (512)327-1372.

Discounts, Discounts, Discounts

The State Bar of Texas Member Discounts program offers discounts on products and services that you may already use. Through the program, members can receive discounts on such services as car rentals, clothing, computer hardware and software, delivery services, and office supplies. To learn more, visit www.texas-bar.com/discounts.

TexasBarCLE

TexasBarCLE is an excellent source for solo and small firm lawyers. Six times a year, TexasBarCLE offers free online CLE classes for MCLE credit. In addition, State Bar members have access to a selection of free CLE articles from the TexasBarCLE online library (www.texasbarcle.com).

Ten Minute Mentor

Looking for a quick refresher on alternative dispute resolution or criminal law? Look no further than Ten Minute Mentor (www.tenminutementor.com), a joint project of TYLA and TexasBarCLE, where you'll find free videos on a variety of law topics. You can view topics by speaker or category or search by keyword.

Networking

More than 10,500 Texas lawyers have registered for Texas Bar Circle, the State Bar's online professional network for attorneys. Texas Bar Circle is the perfect place to find and offer career opportunities and join groups of attorneys with similar interests. One of the most active groups in Texas Bar Circle is Solo and

Small Law Firms, where members are sharing ideas and referring business. To join, visit **www.texasbarcircle.com**.

Home Lawyering, Anyone?

One way to save money is to practice from home. The savings you may get from practicing from your home may be worth giving up rented space. It's completely doable, but requires a change in thinking.

As a lawyer who practices from home, you can eliminate the need for a law library by utilizing your county's law library and the aforementioned Casemaker 2.1.

With a little ingenuity and some legwork, you can save a little here and there and weather the storm of this chaotic economy.

RESOURCE GUIDE

CAREER CENTER http://texasbar.legalstaff.com

CASEMAKER 2.1 www.texasbar.com (under "My Bar Page") and www.texasbarcle.com

LAW PRACTICE MANAGEMENT www.texasbarcle.com/CLE/LMHome.asp

MEMBER DISCOUNTS www.texasbar.com/discounts

STATE BAR OF TEXAS INSURANCE TRUST

www.sbotit.com

TEN MINUTE MENTOR
www.tenminutementor.com

TEXASBARCLE www.texasbarcle.com

Texas Bar Circle
www.texasbarcircle.com

Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program www.texasbar.com/tlap

Texas Legal Protection Plan www.tlpp.org

The State Bar of Texas has a page of resources for tough times on its website. Visit www.texasbar.com/toughtimes.