



NETWORKING

BY PATRICIA L. GARCIA

The State Bar of Texas is committed to providing Texas lawyers with the tools and resources they need to be successful — especially during these tough economic times. At texasbar.com/toughtimes, Texas lawyers can find links to job search sites, free legal research, member discounts, free CLE, and stress-management assistance. The State Bar is also committed to helping Texas lawyers find ways to build their practice through networking.

Networking has become an essential part of an attorney's everyday life. But, it may not be especially gratifying to some. It does not need to be this way, says **Debra Bruce**, president of Lawyer-Coach, L.L.C., a law practice management coaching and training firm in Houston. "Some attorneys don't like networking because they view networking as selling something or as small talk and a waste of time," she says. "Networking is not about selling yourself; it's about building relationships."

TEXAS BAR CIRCLE

Want a fun and easy way to build relationships? Utilize social media, says Houston attorney **Bob Bennett**, owner of Bob Bennett & Associates. He is active on Texas Bar Circle (texasbarcircle.com), the State Bar's social and professional network that is limited to only State Bar members. Bennett has more than 1,000 friends and his list is growing. "Texas Bar Circle is one of the best things that the State Bar offers — and it's free," Bennett says. "There's no question that I've developed relationships with people due to Texas Bar Circle — about 900 of my friends are those that I didn't have a connection with before [meeting on Texas Bar Circle]."

But, just as in face-to-face networking, social media can only give you what you put into it — Bennett is no bystander on Texas Bar Circle. He engages his connections by posting news items and fielding questions posed by other members.

TEXAS YOUNG LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

Search for "networking" on TYLA's Ten Minute Mentor (tenminutementor.com) and you'll find informative podcasts on building a network, networking tips, marketing yourself to clients, and attracting and retaining clients. The podcasts can be viewed online or downloaded and viewed later.

TYLA also offers *Tools for Winning New Clients*, which gives attorneys the tools to develop new clients through group presentations. TYLA offers PowerPoint presentations that you can use to speak about employment law basics and small business basics. For more information, visit tyla.org or call the TYLA office at (800) 204-2222, ext. 1529.

LOCAL BAR SERVICES

It's likely your local bar association offers several networking events each year, so why are you missing out? Not quite sure how to get into contact with your local bar association? Don't worry, because the State Bar has you covered — the State Bar's Local Bar Services Department can help put you in touch with your local bar. Call (800) 204-2222, ext. 1514 or email localbars@texasbar.com.

PATRICIA L. GARCIA

is associate editor of the *Texas Bar Journal*.