

Quick Questions for . . . Larry Bodine
From HBC's Sound Bites Blog
June 25, 2012

<http://www.hellermanbaretz.com/soundbites/quick-questions-larry-bodine>

If you've been in legal marketing for any amount of time, you've probably heard of [Larry Bodine](#). And if you've been in legal marketing for a long time, you probably belonged to Larry's LawMarketing listserv. Recently, we received an email announcing that Larry would be terminating the listserv—an understandable decision given the declining place of listservs in today's information environment. Still, it made us nostalgic for the spirited discussions on the board and Larry's good-humored moderation of them. We caught up with Larry, now the Editor in Chief of Lawyers.com, for a look back at the influential listserv and his thoughts on what's ahead.

What was your impetus for starting the listserv, and what was the initial reaction to it?

Back in 1996 there was no place online where legal marketers could get quick answers to questions like, "Are you doing a client survey?" "How much does that new job pay?" "Do you know about a good graphic design shop?" So two colleagues and I in Chicago started the LawMarketing Listserv when this was whiz-bang technology. At the time I was the marketing director for Sidley in Chicago and needed to be able to send an email to dozens of marketing colleagues quickly and easily. This listserv was the answer and it quickly grew to 1,000 members worldwide by word of mouth alone.

We got so big, that *The American Lawyer* magazine hosted a party for Listserv members at Tavern on the Green in Central Park in New York. A bus picked us up at the hotel where the LMA conference was, and we went to our own special, fancy event. It was a magic event where people who had become fast friends on the Listserv got to meet each other in person. We had door prizes, free drinks and special black "G4P" buttons. Ostensibly, G4P mean "going for profit." But if you were in the know, it stood for "gluttons for punishment," which is how many law firm marketers feel.

Do you have a favorite memory from your time moderating the listserv?

The day I'll never forget is September 11, 2001. Everyone I knew was in shock as the World Trade Towers fell, and listserv members from around the world sent us wonderful messages of sympathy and support. It helped me get through that terrible day and impressed me how great people can be in times of trouble.

The listserv members have a terrific sense of humor. We got so many Internet jokes that we had to limit them to a Friday Funny day, and jokes had to be G-rated so as not to offend anyone. Some members still objected to funnies on a business listserv. I recall sending a message that, "if you have *too much humor and laughter in your life*, you can set up a rule in Outlook to filter out Friday Funnies.

Occasionally listserv members would get into arguments, disobey the rules (like posting a job without a salary) or improperly self-promote themselves. I personally didn't want to be the "The Heavy," because the list members were all my friends. So I created an imaginary person – "Uncle Lar" – who was a grumpy guy who wore flannel shirts and smoked cigars. Uncle Lar would enforce the rules and scold people in a gruff manner. He threatened rule-breakers with, "I'll come over, tear off your arm and beat you with the bloody stump." This pseudonym was effective and fit in with the sense of humor on the Listserv.

If you were to create something like the listserv today, what format would you choose? A Twitter chat? A LinkedIn group? Something else entirely?

Nothing is as good as a well-moderated listserv. So we moved the LawMarketing Listserv to Yahoo Groups. Anyone can join for free at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Lawmarketing>. Twitter isn't as good because you're limited to

145 characters. A LinkedIn Group might work, but they tend to lack interaction.

What is the biggest mistake you see firms making in their social media efforts?

Inaction. I talk to many sophisticated lawyers who still view social media as a fad they can ignore. They don't realize that there's a huge online conversation and they are missing all the new business they could get. They give me lame excuses like "I don't have time to read the directions." They don't realize that 3 out of 4 clients go online at some point in the lawyer selection process, according to new LexisNexis research. See <http://bit.ly/MHdMAZ>.

You were vocal in your opposition to the ABA 20/20 committee's consideration of regulations limiting lawyers' online business development activities. Were you pleased with the committee's relatively limited recommendations?

Yes. There is no need to specify a set of disciplinary rules governing use of the internet. Existing rules are sufficient. The promulgation of ethics rules would have had a severe chilling effect on lawyer use of the Internet – as if lawyers aren't risk-averse already.