

After 30 years of working with lawyers, I know one thing for certain. Lawyers are almost always risk-averse. We are trained to be this way – to spot issues, minimize risks, and identify worst-case scenarios. We fear not knowing an answer, being wrong, or giving bad advice. Yes, we are definitely learning to look for the positive, for opportunities to help others enhance their businesses and personal lives. Yet risk-aversion remains high, and few examples are more apparent to me than lawyers who are reluctant to greet and introduce themselves to strangers. *“It’s outside my comfort zone...I’m not good at small talk...I don’t want to be seen as selling...”* The list is long.

Joyfully, however, I’ve witnessed change here in the WCBA. I’ve seen people start stepping outside their comfort zone with success for themselves and our Bar. I view it as people *expanding* their comfort zone by stepping *into* a space within the Bar.

For example, New Lawyers Section co-chair Stephanie Garris did this recently during the social hour after the *Starting From Scratch: Practice Basics* seminar. Stephanie says she is uncomfortable and not good at meeting and introducing new people to others. Yet as she walked new lawyers around, other lawyers were impressed by her hosting and connecting skills and said so. In fact, Stephanie adopted her host attitude before the event. She suggested we specifically invite the Master Lawyers Section and she personally asked several experienced lawyers to attend.

So what did it take and how can more of us step outside our own comfort zone? Obviously Stephanie recognized and embraced her responsibility as a co-chair of the sponsoring section. For the rest of us, regardless of whose event it is, adopting a host attitude to focus on the needs of others is an excellent way to move past our own discomfort. Working [for] the room may take a little John Wayne as well: *“Courage is being scared to death and saddling up anyway.”* Or consider the advice from Julia Child that I used to learn how to flip omelets and crepes in the air: *“In cooking you have to have a what-the-hell attitude.”*

As new lawyers, Monika Sacks, Joe Simon, John Reiser and Arianne Slay likely had to step outside their comfort zones. But at the New Lawyers seminar they were smooth professionals generously sharing their time and advice. Joe, John, and Arianne’s section was as entertaining a session as I’ve ever seen, and, as Criminal Law moderator Sam Bernstein put it, Monika’s advice was like liquid gold. Thank you to all, including Judge Burke, Judge Kuhnke and the 22 lawyers who came to the social hour.

If our annual Trivia Challenge on March 7 hasn’t sold out yet, what the heck, call the office and register! I hope to see you there.

Cheers from the Bar,
Elizabeth