



# Legal Practice Management News

...adding value to the business of law

## ALPMA Discovers Star Search's Kylie

Well, we would love to lay a claim to this, but the truth of the matter is, 100% Kylie already had a fabulous reputation before blitzing the ALPMA 2004 Legal Management Summit Conference Dinner.

A run down of the evening started with a small hiccup. Not enough seating had the Park Hyatt Hotel scurrying for an extra tables and settings. Once seated guests took a moment to drink in the gorgeous atmosphere of the Grand Ballroom. The evening started off with what was supposed to be quiet background music, but every effort to quieten the GH Band fell upon deaf ears. Perhaps this play on words has enlightened us to the problem. Nonetheless, the food was fabulous and service great.

Then 100% Kylie burst onto the stage with her very sexy dancers and the crowd was frighteningly still. The organisers of the dinner entertainment sat biting their nails when 100%Kylie played her first song to a very quiet room. As it turns out, the crowd were just so amazed at the likeness of 100% Kylie, they were silently running their mathematical brains around the conundrum of ALPMA paying around \$1,000,000 fee for the real Kylie to perform for us. Jokes aside, the dance floor was quickly filled and the stage jammed with Managers and Partners from law firms all around Australia strutting their stuff.

On the whole, a stunning evening with a large proportion of delegates partying to the wee hours of the morning in the Park Hyatt's Cuba Bar. Roll on Summit 2005.



2004 Legal Management Summit Gold Sponsors

A sincere thanks to all of our 2005 Summit Sponsors. Gold - Axxia and Interwoven Caseflow Aderant, Anstat, Anuva, BHL Axiom, CITEC Confirm, DEGW, Enspire Australia, Financial Services Partners, Grace Record Management, Grundig Dictation Machines, Integrated Solutions, Law Perfect – Infinitylaw, Law Point, Legalco, Locus, MarketOne, Middleware, National Australia Bank, Owen Stickels, PowerTel, Pronoun and TAB Datafile.

## Inaugural ALPMA Innovation Awards

ALPMA would like to take the opportunity to thank all firms for their submissions to the Innovation Awards. The overwhelming response was of a very high caliber. This indicates that this successful launch will remain on the ALPMA agenda. Congratulations to Minter Ellison Adelaide, winners in the 50+ lawyers category and Gilshennan & Luton, winners of the <50 lawyers category.

Bruce Heaney of ADERANT announced the winners at the conference dinner and awarded each of the firms with a trophy for their tremendous effort and achievement. Each of the award winners were given the opportunity to present their innovative system implementation during day 2 of the conference.

The 2005 Innovation Awards will be open for submission in the coming months. Firms are encouraged to submit an application keeping in mind that the idea may not necessarily be new to the industry, but the practice of implementing the innovation may prove to be the winning formula.

The 2004 Awards were

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## President's Column

Michelle has taken a short break over the Christmas holidays, all for a wonderful reason. Congratulations to Michelle and her husband Mark on the safe arrival of Jordan Jessica Barnard 6lb 13oz, born 23<sup>rd</sup> December. Jordan's ALPMA Membership is currently pending ☺



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## Welcome A'board!



ALPMA are thrilled to announce our newest recruit to the national board. Steve Sampson of Russell Kennedy Solicitors will share the increasing workload our board members are under with the growth of ALPMA. Steve's diverse corporate

background includes, amongst other things, twelve years with a major global telecommunications equipment manufacturer and includes:

- a senior finance role in the Australian subsidiary
- three years living in Singapore in a senior business development role responsible for the Asia region
- two years living in the UK in senior R&D, product prime and global customer service roles for a new product line
- two years living in the USA (Florida) in senior global sales, marketing and account management roles

Steve's first exposure to professional services firms was upon his return to Australia in 2001, where he worked as global CFO/COO for a large Australian based international architectural firm.

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### Editorial details

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## **2004 Legal Management Summit The Winning Edge – Overtake your Competition**

Whilst the conference was a resounding success, for members who were unable to attend, Bronwyn Pott, CEO Swaab Attorneys has provided an overview article of the summit.

Where possible, speakers notes from the summit can be found under Member Services/Library Resources on the ALPMA website.

### **Conference Overview**

**Written by Bronwyn Pott – CEO Swaab Attorneys**

A speaker at a conference I once attended urged delegates not to “go overboard” with new ideas when they got back to the office. He said ‘Instead, take one or two ideas and run with those; anything else is too ambitious’. I’m sure he would have been challenged to choose only ‘one or two’ ideas from the Legal Management Summit in Melbourne in November.

As the keynote and principal speaker, Blane Prescott from the Hilderbrandt Group was as impressive as ever, offering a unique insight into the changing legal market and the challenges faced by leaders in the legal industry worldwide.

Blane noted that increasing competition and consolidation in both law firms and their clients were leading to increased segmentation in and between law firms. He predicted that, with the maturing of the legal market as a competitive industry, no firm could afford to ‘sit on the fence’ with their strategic positioning. As the need for a viable market strategy was now urgent, it was refreshing to hear examples of successful strategies, and also to hear the ‘war stories’ of firm circumstances to be avoided where possible.

The view that sophisticated work was migrating to firms with depth, that money and talent would follow the sophisticated work, and that clients would follow talent, probably sent many managers and partners back to the office fired up to discover what benefits and processes they could put in place to secure their current staff, and what structure and rewards were likely to ‘push the buttons’ of members of new generation of lawyers arriving now.

Following Blane’s description of the segmentation of law firms, **Dr Debby King-Rowley** spoke about ways to differentiate your firm in the marketplace. For anyone undertaking strategic planning, her explanation of the three cornerstone value disciplines of 1. customer intimacy, 2. operational excellence and 3. product leadership would have been a considerable help. The notion that a successful firm should be the market leader in one of these areas, as well as maintain a high rating in the other two areas, led to some interesting discussion from the floor by those who wished to challenge the application of general industry principles to a professional services firm. Dr King completed her presentation by asking everyone to consider the behaviours they would try to develop in their firm, as well as a reward structure to encourage that behaviour, because regardless of how much we wanted success, if you are rewarding behaviour ‘A’, don’t expect behaviour ‘B’.

In session 3, organisational psychologist **Terry Lee** covered the topical theme of ***Emotional Intelligence***, explaining the Leadership styles publicised by Daniel Goleman and the associated emotional competencies. Who could resist a discussion on leadership and the behaviours that can inspire others, plus a self-assessment test to identify your own style?

The panel discussion on ***Who Should Lead Camelot*** saw an interesting tension between the panel members who were split between the ranks of Managing Partner and CEO. Whilst it didn’t answer the question, it did provide an interesting insight into the operation of several of our larger firms.

**On Friday evening** we were treated to fine food and entertainment by ***100% Kylie***, and while the dancing styles of some delegates could be described as quintessentially novel, it certainly looked like a good time was had by all. I’m sure anyone who attended any conference would agree that the networking with both delegates and vendors is a very worthwhile exercise. The 2004 conference certainly provided convivial grounds to widen our networks.

## Conference Overview

Written by Bronwyn Pott – CEO Swaab Attorneys(continued)

Saturday morning saw **Blane Prescott** return to lead an engaging session on the *Ssecrets of Successful Practice Groups*. The session covered everything to do with practice groups, from the justification and development of practice groups, to the pitfalls that abound if care is not taken with the utilisation of this structure. Blane explained that practice groups could be formed around areas of law, industries, specific clients teams and even across geographic locations. They may be permanent or created to meet a temporary need. Ultimately their purpose is to group skills for a task and provide depth to a team.

In Blane's view, by far the most important features of a practice group, beyond structure and function, were the skills and attitudes of the practice group leader. Like Terry Lee's discussion the previous day, Blane stressed the importance of the communication style and the coaching and mentoring skills of a successful leader, and noted the need for these partners to have long term vision, sensitivity to clients, the ability to inspire and motivate their team, and to instil a balanced sense of optimism.

Practice groups provided an opportunity to introduce group rewards rather than individual rewards, to identify contribution rather than profit, etc. By far the biggest complaint from young lawyers (worldwide) is about a lack of leadership or coaching.

**Alec Bashinsky** presented a lateral session entitled 'tips from the stars'. Alex worked at Cisco Systems where a successful culture change had been effected in what was a highly competitive environment. Recently appointed 'People and Development Manager' for Deloitte, his brief was to bring the characteristics of a competitive commercial organisation into a professional services environment.

Alec said his focus needed to be on recruiting and retaining the best talent, as well as motivating and developing internal talent. It was his belief that by doing so, he would enhance productivity and contribute to the bottom line.

On the premise that "You can't get to a new place with the same behaviours", Alec proposed the need to find ways to change the behaviours themselves. He felt this provided a significant challenge to managing a cultural change. Alec believed introducing fun at work, empowering staff, and providing good career development and road maps was only as important as having management capable of "walking the walk" of integrity and trust. His experience led him to believe that through empowerment and trust you could grow the business, grow the team and grow yourself.

**Blane Prescott's** final session was entitled *Slip and Fall – what causes firms to fail?*. The focus of this session was aimed more at examples of 'what to do right' rather than 'what not to do'. His belief that law firms are not unique, that a successful firm will display the characteristics of any other successful organisation, was demonstrated by an interactive session which confirmed that the experience of success was largely common regardless of the size or style of organisation delegates belonged to when they experienced success.

The notion of success in a legal practice can be relative, but was defined as a firm delivering high profit (given the firm's size and location), possessing good employment practices and high morale amongst lawyers and staff, receiving high grades from clients for customer service and quality of work, and holding a reputation for dealing with problems quickly and effectively.

## Conference Overview

Written by Bronwyn Pott – CEO  
Swaab Attorneys (continued)

Blane stressed the importance of setting high standards for partnership, and reminded us that the best player is not necessarily the best coach. He advised firms to avoid diluting income, decision-making, and their reputation by comprising standards for partnership. He said that studies showed firms were as well known for their weakest partners as they are the strongest, and cautioned against using the two-tier system of partnership to avoid making hard decisions on the future of longer term professional staff. Great firms, he said, were known for the consistency of their partners.

Blane said The most effective means of prompting change in people is NOT by emails, incentives, job descriptions or plans, but by face to face communications. This is one of the most common elements in successful and transformed firms'. He said 'The toughest job is figuring out what motivates each lawyer, and customising your approach. Like a zookeeper, law firm leaders and managers need to understand that everyone has individual needs; the challenge is to work out what will motivate individuals, and adjust their leadership style accordingly.'

The afternoon finished on a high note (especially for those fortunate delegates who were recipients of vendor door prizes (including me - many thanks for my magnum of SA Shiraz!). Everyone left with the promise of another thought-provoking program in Sydney in October 21/22 2005.



Delegates have the opportunity to visit a range of Suppliers to the legal industry under the one roof



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Throughout the states many different programs have been undertaken. All of which clearly identify the Associations ability to coordinate the sharing of knowledge with the focus of improving the quality of the management of law firms within Australia.

## Queensland

**The Queensland program got off to a very strong start in February with one of the largest crowds for some time attending the monthly meeting.**

**Approximately 50 members attended a presentation by Kathleen Singleton on Strategic Planning in Law Firms.**

**March speaker for Queensland is Mr John Briton the Legal Services Commissioner. Mr Briton was appointed to the position from 1 July 2000 to take over the investigation of complaints against solicitors and barristers in Queensland.**

**He is going to explain his experiences in the first 6 months of operation and hopefully provide some insight to members on how they can avoid complaints being made against their firms to his office.**

**The Queensland Law Society has announced the introduction of compulsory professional development from 1 July 2004. Gill Richardson from The Queensland Law Society will be our presenter in April to explain the scheme and also to explain to members what they need to do to be able to include in-house training sessions as part of the CPD environment.**

**The Queensland Association is also working closely again with the Queensland Law Firm Marketers Group. We are co-sponsoring with the Queensland Law Society Continuing Legal Education Department, a series of management seminars for sole practitioners or small practice partners.**

## New South Wales

As reported in the last edition of the Legal Practice Management News [August 2004] New South Wales has expanded its educational offerings with the introduction of our Twilight Seminar Series. The second of the Twilight Series was the hugely successful workshop "The Challenge of Change" presented by Catherine Smithson. Catherine (a lecturer with the Macquarie Graduate School of Management) through a series of interactive exercises gave attendees a new perspective on change – how we view it, how we deal with it, and how to successfully implement change and manage resistance.

Our monthly meetings continue to keep members up to date on matters pertaining to the management of law firms including an update from the CEO of the Law Society of NSW and a presentation by the Attorney General's Department on the electronic CourtLink program. The last formal meeting of 2004 was a presentation on the impact on employers of the reforms in superannuation. 2005 is opening with "Occupational Overuse Syndrome – Do you know if there is an OOS risk in your workplace".

The Annual Partners' Luncheon in October was addressed by Simon Tupman on the topic of "Legal Practice: from profession to business – has the pendulum swung too far?" and the Christmas dinner at Dockside provided a suitably festive close to the year.

2005 promises to be an extremely exciting one for NSW as hosts of the national conference. We are thrilled to announce that the **2005 Legal Management Summit** will be held on **Friday 21<sup>st</sup> and Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> October** at the newly made over **Hilton Hotel**. Right in the heart of Sydney CBD, a recent site tour of the Hilton confirmed that this venue will be one of the most stunning in Sydney. The conference will kick off with a cocktail party on the Thursday evening for all ALPMA (NSW) members and for early arrivals from interstate. The following two days will be filled with educational and informative sessions aimed squarely at every level of 'hands on' management. The Conference 2005 Committee is working hard and more information will be released shortly.

## South Australia

Our 2005 program commenced with Denise Picton from OzTrain giving a half-day seminar on *Managing Conflict*, on Thursday 10 February. Our next local seminar will be *Computer Systems for Small Law Firms – A Shopping List*, on Friday 6 May. We are also planning a session on *Market Research*.

The Human Resources Group met every two months for discussion on set topics and informal networking. Topics have included *Workplace Bullying*, *Staff Retention* and *Interviewing Techniques*.

On 11 November 2004 Alan Slater of Business Dynamics led a discussion on *Creating A Client Service Culture*. To wrap up the year, Practice Management members met for Christmas Drinks on Tuesday 30 November.

If you have suggestions as to issues we should address, please contact one of your Committee members:

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David Sinclair Lynch Meyer

Trevor Stanbury Andersons

Lindy Donaldson Australian Government Solicitor

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Ray Matcham Matcham & Co.

## Victoria

The Victorian Chapter of ALPMA has had an extremely industrious 2<sup>nd</sup> half to the financial year with successful seminars and workshops, in some cases seating over 80 people per session.

The Learning & Development Committee are congratulated on organising an interesting mix of topics to address all areas of management as well as allowing important CPD points to be credited. Recent topics throughout the year have addressed bullying, dealing with difficult situations in the workplace, technology and flexible work practices. John Cain, CEO of the LIV, provided an update on important issues facing the legal profession.

The Tasmanian program continued with a terrific workshop facilitated by Kriss Will featuring "Your People Your People – Human Resources Management Solutions for busy Partners and Managers.

ALPMA (VIC) co-hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Legal Management Summit. This incredibly successful event, supported by 100% of the attendees feedback, indicated that they would attend another ALPMA Summit.

A record number of members and guests attended the Christmas Function at the absolutely stunning Blue Fire Grill in Docklands.

The 2005 program is underway with a host of seminars and workshops planned throughout the year. The web site events calendar and fliers will keep all members and non-members up to date. Be sure to keep the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month earmarked for our lunchtime events.