



The Specialist

Maximizing Your Online Presence By Beth McIntire

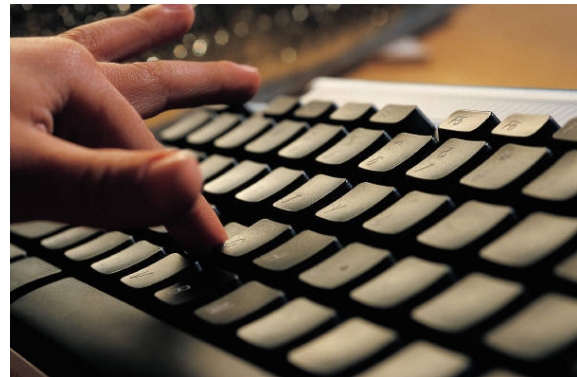
Have you tried all these things to drive traffic to your firm's Web site and maximize your online presence?

- [Register](#) with the N.C. State Bar's Web site if you haven't already. Then, login and update your profile to include your Web site address so it'll be included in your profile on www.nclawspecialists.gov.
- Set up a page for your law firm on Facebook and encourage employees, friends and family to "like" it and visit it often. Post useful and interesting updates weekly or monthly.
- On your personal Facebook page, link to your firm's Web site. If you mention your firm in a status update, include your Web link, and change the privacy setting on that particular status to "public" so it's viewable to search engines and non-friends.
- Add a blog to your firm web site, and update it a few times a week. Write articles with beneficial information that people might want to find if they're searching the Internet. When appropriate, include links to other relevant blog entries, as in, "Click here to read an article I wrote last month on this topic."
- Be sure to use keywords in your Web site and blog that Google searches should use to find you; e.g., if you're a bankruptcy specialist, mention bankruptcy a few times. Keywords are especially useful in the titles of blog entries and Web pages, and in bulleted lists.
- Link to your Web site in your LinkedIn profile. Add status updates on LinkedIn often, and participate in LinkedIn group discussions. Read a few weeks of discussions before jumping in. If the group's etiquette

seems to allow it, post links to your blog entries as well as other topical articles.

Don't forget Twitter – another great place to stay connected to current and potential clients while sharing links to your articles.

Raise awareness of the State Bar's board certification and legal specialization program by linking to us from your firm's Web site. Have your Webmaster copy the following into the HTML code to your site: `<i>Board Certified by the North Carolina State Bar's Board of Legal Specialization</i>`



You can link to www.nclawspecialists.gov in your Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter profiles, and also in your email signature. Plus, be sure to "like" us on Facebook (<http://tinyurl.com/ncbarspec>) and join our LinkedIn group (<http://tinyurl.com/6wlwrbn>). Feel free to start discussions and link to articles to help us add relevant content to these sites.

Directory to include email addresses

The 2012 printed directory of Board Certified Legal Specialists will include the email address for each specialist for the first time. We will use the email address that we have on file, (i.e., the one through which you received this newsletter).

Please contact Lanice Heidbrink at lheidbrink@ncbar.gov or 919-828-4620 as soon as possible if you prefer to have a different email address listed or prefer not to list an email address.

Annual Luncheon and Awards Presentation

Each year we are proud to present the following awards based on the nominations that we receive from board certified specialists. Your input is very important in this process and we hope that you will take a moment to nominate a colleague. The awards are explained below and nomination forms are attached and available online at www.nclawspecialists.gov. Nomination forms are due by April 1, 2012.

The awards will be presented at the Annual Specialists Luncheon on Friday, April 27, 2012, along with recognition of new board certified specialists. We hope you can join us for this annual event.

The Sara H. Davis Excellence Award: Nominations for this award are accepted from North Carolina certified specialists. The award is presented to a certified specialist who exemplifies excellence in his/her daily work as an attorney and serves as a model for other lawyers. Special consideration is given for a long and consistent record of handling challenging matters successfully, for sharing knowledge and experience with other lawyers, for earning the respect and admiration of all others with whom the lawyer comes into contact in his/her daily work, and for high ethical standards.

The James E. Cross, Jr. Leadership Award: Nominations for this award are accepted from members of the North Carolina State Bar who have worked closely with the nominee. The award is presented to a specialist who has taken an active leadership role in his/her practice area through presentations at CLE seminars, scholarly writings, participation in groundbreaking cases, or service to an established professional organization.

The Howard L. Gum Service Award: This award is given to a specialty committee member who consistently excels in completing committee tasks. The recipient is highly dedicated to legal specialization, donates his/her time to committee responsibilities, and responds to the needs of the staff and the Board, in exemplary fashion.

The Annual Luncheon for Certified Specialists will be held on Friday, April 27, 2012 at the Renaissance Hotel 4100 Main at North Hills St., Raleigh 11:45 - 1:30 PM Mark Your Calendar!

Congratulations to the new board certified specialists!

Appellate

Christopher Browning, Jr., Raleigh
John D. Bryson*, High Point
Michelle Connell, Raleigh
Lisa S. Costner*, Winston-Salem
Justice Robert H. Edmunds, Jr.*, Raleigh
Justice James Exum, Raleigh
J. Clark Fischer*, Winston-Salem
Judge Martha Geer, Raleigh
Tobias Hampson, Raleigh
Geoffrey W. Hosford*, Wilmington
John Korzen, Winston-Salem
John Maddrey, Raleigh
J. Matthew Martin*, Asheville
Jonathan McGirt, Raleigh
Justice Burley Mitchell, Raleigh
Jeffrey E. Noecker*, Wilmington
Preston Odom, Charlotte
Frank Queen, Waynesville
Leslie Rawls, Charlotte
Douglas Ruley, Leichesters
Matthew Sawchak, Raleigh
Elizabeth Scherer, Raleigh

*transitioned from criminal appellate specialist

Criminal Law

Rosemary Godwin – State/Federal, Raleigh
Michael Greene – State, Charlotte
Andrew McCoppin – Federal, Cary
Robert McClellan – State/Federal, Greensboro
Daniel Roberts – State, Charlotte
Stacey Rubain – State, Winston-Salem
James Rutherford – State, Wilmington

Estate Planning

John King, New Bern
Pamela Silverman, Charlotte
Mary Skinner, New Bern
Matthew Thompson, Wilmington

Family Law

Catherine Bailey, Raleigh
Judith Daly, Statesville
Teresa Davis, Cary
Christine Eatmon, Wake Forest
Amy Edwards, Greenville
Susan Goetcheus, Raleigh
Kara Helms, Winston-Salem
Kathy Holmes, Raleigh
Stephanie Jenkins, Raleigh

Barri Payne, Durham

Regina Sutherland, Raeford
Leslie VanDerHave, Greenville

Immigration Law

Heather Ziemba, Charlotte
Helen Jugovic, Wilmington

Real Property Law

Benjamin Ellis – Commercial, Charlotte
John Kiser – Commercial, Greensboro

Social Security

Kevin Morton, Winston-Salem
Amelia Patton, Elkin
Jennifer Taylor, Raleigh

Worker's Compensation

Matthew Bertics, Raleigh
Matthew Healey, Raleigh
Jennifer Jones, Raleigh
April Sequin, Raleigh
Adam Smith, Cary
William Wallace, Charlotte
Cameron Wesley, Charlotte
Robert Whitley, New Bern

The Benefits of Positive Peer Review by Bettie Sousa



About the Author

Bettie Kelley Sousa, a partner with Smith Debnam Narron Drake Saintsing & Myers LLP in Raleigh, N.C., is the current president of the American Board of Certification and is board certified in Creditors' Rights.

Regardless of the way it makes you feel, the Internet has given a pulpit to every preacher, a podium to every politician and a microphone to everyone with an opinion. The age of restaurant reviews and mystery shoppers has also come, at last, to lawyers. Simply meeting our ethical obligations and abiding by the standard of care are no longer cutting it. Even today's most seasoned lawyer fears the devastation of reading a negative, untrue review on the Internet. But there are places where we can rate and be rated in confidence, with honesty and integrity. There remain professional achievements requiring standards that correctly measure professionalism and competence. Board certification is one such achievement.

Going back to the *Peel* decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1990, we learned that a lawyer may publicize his or her certification as a specialist as determined by a *bona fide* organization, typically one accredited by the ABA Board of Legal Specialization or by a state bar. While there is some variance in practice, the core requirements of specialization are:

- Demonstration of competence in the field of specialization, which is usually done with an examination;
- Actual practice in the field of specialization;
- Completion of continuing legal education courses;
- A clean (or explainable) bar record; and
- Positive peer review.

Positive peer review is not always the easiest of the four to achieve. There are times when the other standards have been met, but a lawyer is denied certification or recertification due to negative peer review. This isn't just a popularity contest, but rather a process, which is both simple and fair.

Both the American Board of Certification (ABC) and the North Carolina Board of Legal Specialization seek reference names of attorneys familiar with the applicant's practice, including opposing counsel. Staff then reviews each peer's response to a brief questionnaire about the applicant. In addition to questions you would expect about felony convictions, professional misconduct and moral turpitude, most are focused on knowledge and ethics, including:

- Do you know of any incidents that reflect a lack of skill, knowledge, proficiency or professionalism in the practice by the applicant?
- Do you recommend the applicant for certification based on the following criteria?
 - (a) knowledge of practice area;
 - (b) advocacy skills (preparation, presentation and consideration of client's interest); and
 - (c) adherence to the ethical standards of practice area attorneys in the community.

While no one negative reference necessarily sinks an application, each reference is given weight by the specialty committee as a whole, which is comprised of lawyers who are board certified in the specialty.

Peer review has been upheld recently by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit in *Doe v. Fla. Bar*, 630 F.3d 1336 (2011), which affirmed the Florida Bar's denial of a recertification application from a domestic law specialist. As stated by Circuit Judge Edward Carnes, recognition as a certified specialist is valid because it distinguishes a "somebody" from the others: "If every attorney who practices in an area is certified in it, then no one is anybody in that field." In this case, the lawyer's peers did not recommend her recertification because of a number of shortcomings, including poor professional judgment, "discourtesy to opposing counsel and instances of unnecessary scheduling difficulties." In short, the Florida Bar determined that this lawyer's numerous negative references from esteemed members of the judiciary and bar warranted the denial of recertification. Peer review worked.

Psychologists tell us that there are many benefits to making nice. If we are hateful to our adversaries, we are sharing that hate with every email, letter, motion hearing, trial and appeal. If we get to know our adversaries, we are less inclined to write off their ideas and compromises as unworkable. We can enjoy our jobs more and, in return, our peers may reward us in a way that matters—with positive peer review.

In Memorium—



Billy Irvin Long, Jr., passed away on, October 20, 2011. He graduated from Statesville High School and Wake Forest University. Bill had a life of many careers, and began practicing law at the age of 40 after graduating from Wake Forest University School of Law. When not in the courtroom, he could be found working on a myriad of do-it-yourself projects, playing golf, or making his famous oatmeal raisin cookies.

Bill was recently certified by the North Carolina State Bar as a specialist in consumer bankruptcy law, and was a partner at Bolton & Long, P.A.



Daniel D. Khoury, 60, of Manteo, died Sept. 7, 2011 in Chapel Hill. A former partner of Aldridge, Seawell and Khoury, Daniel was a partner in the firm of Vandeventer Black. For more than 18 years Daniel served as attorney for the Town of Manteo. He graduated from The Ohio State University and Wake Forest School of Law.

Daniel was a former chair of the Real Property Section and a former member of the North Carolina Bar Association Board of Governors. He served as a councilor for the North Carolina State Bar and on the North Carolina Board of Legal Specialization. Daniel became a board certified specialist in commercial real property law in 1988 .

Board of Legal Specialization

Jeri L. Whitfield, Chair
Greensboro

James B. Angell, Jr.
Raleigh

Laura D. Burton
Greensboro

Carl W. Davis, Jr.
Raleigh

D. Allen Hayes, MD
Raleigh

Judge J. Matthew Martin
Asheville

Priscilla Patterson Taylor
Chapel Hill

Judge Teresa H. Vincent
Greensboro

Lana S. Warlick
Jacksonville

Alice N. Mine,
Executive Director

RECERTIFICATION REMINDER

Specialists who were recertified or certified for the first time in 2007 must renew their certifications in 2012. For administrative convenience, certifications granted in November of 2007 are considered effective on January 1, 2008. Therefore, recertification applicants have until December 31, 2012, to satisfy their CLE and substantial involvement requirements for recertification. Each specialty has different CLE requirements, so please be sure that you are meeting the CLE requirements specific to your specialty.

You will receive a detailed e-mail memorandum on June 30, 2012, if you are eligible for recertification. **You will receive no other notification so please be sure that your e-mail address with the specialization department is current.** Recertification applications will be available on the specialization website <http://www.nclawspecialists.gov> starting June 30, 2012.

Please contact Lanice Heidbrink at 919.719.9271 (lheidbrink@ncbar.gov) or Denise Mullen at 919.828.4620 (dmullen@ncbar.gov) if you have any questions about the application process.

Committee Chairs

Justice Robert Edmunds—Appellate
Practice

Kevin Sink—Bankruptcy

Ames Chamberlin and Jan Pritchett—
Criminal Law

Eric Zogry—Juvenile Delinquency
(subspecialty of Criminal Law)

Kate Mewhinney—Elder Law

Sandy Clark—Estate Planning and
Probate Law

Charles Coltrane—Family Law

David Long—Immigration

Kimberly Coward—Real Property

Brian Peterson—Social Security
Disability

Louise Root—Workers's
Compensation

The Specialist Newsletter is written and edited by Denise Mullen, Assistant Director of Legal Specialization and Lanice Hedibrink, Executive Assistant. Please submit comments and article ideas to dmullen@ncbar.gov