

The Woman Advocate Committee's Meeting Mentor Program

By Jennifer Hoekel



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"All lasting business is built on friendship." —Alfred A. Montapert

I joined the Woman Advocate Committee last fall, hoping to find women litigators from whom to learn, and with whom to network and sometimes commiserate. I previously read the committee's quarterly newsletters and was intrigued by the concept of a group of women litigators gathering to discuss the variety of issues that face us in this profession. Shortly after I joined the committee, I received an email inviting me to attend the committee's monthly conference calls. The first call that I participated in discussed the Corporate Counsel CLE Seminar, particularly the concept of a Meeting Mentor Program, which pairs up new members

of the Woman Advocate Committee with current members who act as mentors at ABA events or seminars. In large part because of this mentoring program, I decided to attend the CLE seminar.

I have been a lawyer for 13 years and have attended my fair share of conferences and out-of-town CLEs. My experiences have been mixed. While attending some conferences, I have met a person or two whom I attempted to keep in contact with, but more often, I left only meeting the one or two people sitting nearby and never speaking to anyone from the conference again.

Attending the Corporate Counsel CLE Seminar, held at the Walt Disney World Swan Resort in Orlando this past February, was a completely different experience. I knew the names of some committee members from the monthly conference calls, but I had never spoken with or met any of these women. Through the mentoring program, however, I was introduced to my mentor, Trish O'Prey, via email and a subsequent phone call. Trish and I agreed to meet at the kick-off cocktail party, an event I honestly would have otherwise skipped. I am a pretty outgoing

person, but even I dread walking into a cocktail party knowing no one. Within about 20 minutes, I met six other women from the committee. Later that evening, I attended the Dutch Treat Dinner and learned more about each of these women.

Trish and I attended the seminars and the committee spa event, and I had the opportunity to get to know several more interesting women. Trish and I even decided to attend the Saturday dinner with our families, something neither of us originally intended to do. The dinner gave each of us the opportunity to spend more time with some of the women we had met over the previous three days.

Due to the welcome I received from the members of the Woman Advocate Committee at the Corporate Counsel CLE Seminar, becoming more involved has been an easy thing to do. I have already volunteered to be the committee's state liaison for Missouri, and I definitely plan to attend more ABA events in the future as a member of the Woman Advocate Committee.

Jennifer Hoekel is a partner at the St. Louis law firm Serwinger Powers LLP, where she practices intellectual property litigation.