
GUEST BLOGS FOR *THE LAWYER*

Published by L&E Global Executive Director Stephan Swinkels

October 2013



EARLY START IN BOSTON



Monday, October 7, 2013 | Published by [Stephan Swinkels](#)

After Dublin, what city is more Irish...Boston of course... and considering the successful turnout of the IBA conference in Dublin last year, it appears that the luck of the Irish continues with another impressive IBA Annual Conference.

For some, the conference already started on Sunday morning as we attended a master class facilitated by Harvard Professor Heidi Gardner, who talked about how lawyers can optimally use their capabilities to enhance their mentoring relationships for their associates and each other and make them mutually beneficial. Music to my ears!

Professor Gardner also explored how performance pressures shape leaders', mid-level professionals' and juniors' propensity to engage in effective mentoring behaviors. The workshop proved very stimulating – naturally Harvard has a well-deserved reputation of having a world-class faculty. Some of the solutions offered by professor Gardner to better deal with stress situations included drink enough water, do not forget to eat, get enough sleep and do not forget to socialize – all absolutely true, but recommendations that can at times lose their relevance in the day-to-day reality.

This year a record 6,000 people are expected to attend. Even in times of crises the IBA is able to attract a huge contingent of lawyers from all over the world. The conference will touch on a variety of topics, from climate change to human rights, from bullying and harassment in the workplace to the consolidation of legal markets and its impact on local firms, just to name a few.

The key note speaker at the opening ceremony was former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. In her own words: “please ask questions, as I am no longer in government I can now actually answer them!” She was as impressive as ever and was quite adamant in emphasizing the importance of the role the IBA can play, for example, in the battle against human trafficking.

Later this week Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court Stephen Breyer, and former Chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve Paul Volcker will also address the participants – let’s just hope that the government shutdown doesn’t affect their travel budget! The shutdown is of course a great topic of conversation for lawyers. Fortunately, it only affects the conference slightly; just two events have to be re-scheduled. But the jokes are plenty, or as the customs officer at Logan International Airport smilingly said, after allowing the umpteenth lawyer into the United States: “do they really think that it will actually help to bring in an army of international lawyers to solve our little conflict?”

As always, the IBA provides an important networking opportunity that few venues offer. In fact, the IBA Annual conference is as much about networking as it is about anything else. The fact that thousands of legal professionals, from boutique firms to legal powerhouses, from representatives of the judiciary to in-house counsels of Fortune 500 companies, are all in one place, is a truly unique endeavor. And economic crises or not, many firms use the IBA to showcase their success by throwing lavish or modest cocktail receptions. I particularly am looking forward to playing ice hockey with Finish firm Castren & Snellman and to indulge in Ukrainian delights at the “Open Ukraine” reception.

All in all, it will be a week of seeing many familiar faces and making new friends, while attending insightful sessions, and mingling at the numerous extravagant receptions! Believe it or not, attorneys can sometimes be quite organized and even manage to throw a good party!

Read the full article at:

<http://www.thelawyer.com/analysis/opinion/early-start-in-boston/3010731.article>

PICTURE CREDIT: [Tim Sackton](#)

BOSTON VARIETY PROVIDES SPICE



Tuesday, October 15, 2013 | Published by [Stephan Swinkels](#)



It's a funny thing for a European visiting the US and recovering from jetlag, because I woke up again around 4.30 this morning ready to go to work, only to realize that the sun had yet to rise.

So I brewed some coffee, grabbed my laptop, and started the day early – extremely early. As the IBA conference is such a pressure cooker of activities, meetings and expected and unexpected events, there is no guarantee that the day will also end early.

Yesterday was a highly productive day, both socially and professionally. As an employment lawyer, a good part of the day is spent with fellow employment lawyers and attending the labour and employment law and discrimination law section's panels. It is the perfect setting for exchanging experiences, developments and talking about new rules and laws implemented in each jurisdiction.

One of the sessions today is about how to retain employees. As we are considering retention again instead of large restructurings, perhaps this is a good sign for global economic recovery. Apart from attending practice group events related the area of law one is practising, there is also an opportunity to learn about and discuss other topics of interest, like law firm management or the use of technology.

The venue for the IBA conference is the Hynes Convention Center, a huge conference hall, but very convenient and well chosen. It lies in the heart of Boston, which is obviously much preferred over conference halls on the outskirts. A main attraction for many lawyers is that the convention center is opposite the Apple Store. It's debatable whether the lawyers are spending more time at the conference or at this store shopping for the latest gadgets.

Don't get me wrong though, it's not all about shopping and leisure time. The hotels are bustling with small meetings, coffee sessions, quick lunches, break-outs between lawyers and sometimes whole firms, to discuss future cooperation or to exchange information. It's ironic that at a time when everyone can Skype, face time, conference call and so on, lawyers still like to be scheming together in the spirit of a Nixon cabinet meeting. I guess there is nothing like a face-to-face meeting.

The social functions are numerous and Boston is an excellent city to organize an event. Walk along Boylston Street around 6pm and you will go from a samba and caipirinha party, complete with flip flops organized by a Brazilian firm, to Irish folk and stout, to French hors d'oeuvres and champagne. The city of Boston has never been so multicultural.

One of the highlights was a reception hosted by an American firm at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. It provided us with the unique opportunity to mingle and chat while getting a private tour through this fantastic museum. It proves that if you decide to organize an event during the IBA you have to do it well or not at all. As tonight is our own function, I can today prove my own words true.

Read the full article at:

<http://www.thelawyer.com/analysis/opinion/boston-variety-provides-spice/3010839.article>

Photo credit [Wikipedia](#).

FIVE GOLDEN RULES FOR A SUCCESSFUL IBA EXPERIENCE



Thursday, October 17, 2013 | Published by [Stephan Swinkels](#)

After a very busy week in Boston, both learning and networking, I'm still left with the confounding question – is it all worth it?

Is it really worth assembling 6,000 lawyers in one place, organizing dozens of conference sessions which require a considerable amount of time to develop, from selecting moderators, topics and panelists, to attracting participants, planning a slew of receptions and all of the money and advertising that goes along with planning an event of that size, be it large or small, arranging breakfast meetings, lunch meetings, and dinner meetings every day for 5-6 days, plus the time and cost of travelling in and of itself. What do we gain from all of this?

I think it is a question worth asking, because as lawyers we spend a considerable amount of time and money in order to participate and you can multiply those efforts tenfold for your firm's presence and participation. As one lawyer stated:

“IBA's success is such that every year firms say let's spend less money and send less people, but then seem to forget about their good resolution and end up sending more people and spending more money on social events!”

It is easy to get caught up in the hype and the excitement of the weeklong conference, but then you have to ask yourself – what did I really do all week?

For me personally, attending the IBA Annual Conference was absolutely worth it and I think it was extremely productive. But I wonder if everyone who attended can actually say that. If your answer is no, then I would like to propose a set of guidelines for next year's event: 5 Rules for a Successful IBA Experience:

1. **Preparation** – You have to know long before you arrive at the conference what your goals are for attending. What do you, and your firm, want to get out of it? Are you attending so that you can sit in on the sessions and learn about current legal trends? Are you attending so that you can really network – either for a new job or to create

new partnerships? Or are you attending because you simply want to have fun, spend time with your spouse, go to the parties, and get out of the office for a week? All of those reasons are good reasons – but as long as you know what it is you really wish to gain by attending, you will have a much more successful experience.

2. **Content-Strategy** – Developing a content-strategy in advance will also be quite useful as a means of expanding on your preparation goal. For instance, if you prepare ahead of time to use the IBA conference as an opportunity to network, then your content-strategy should revolve around scheduling meetings with the people you wish to meet and attending firm related events where you can optimize your chance to network. You can also organize your 'best practices' agenda in a way to maximize your learning potential with the attorneys and firms that specialize in those fields.
3. **Make Contact** – This is an easy one, but the one we most likely fail to plan accordingly and efficiently in order to achieve. If you know which individuals and firms you specifically wish to meet with – arrange your meetings well in advance and allow yourself sufficient time to spend with them. If you book too many meetings back-to-back you're going to burn out quickly and most likely feel pressured to rush through your meetings, which in turn will make them far less productive. There is nothing like a one-on-one meeting, so contact them ahead of time, plan in advance, and be prepared to discuss the most important issues in order to gain the most from your encounter.
4. **Focus on Your Practice Group** – There is such a wide variety of sessions covering numerous legal topics that choosing which ones to attend can at times be overwhelming. Therefore, you should really narrow your focus to your practice group and perhaps one or two other areas of interest. For instance, I attended sessions covering employment law and law firm management, because those were the most relevant to me.
5. **Organize** – It is difficult to overstate how important it is to organize your affairs ahead of time and to consistently organize your affairs throughout the week of the conference. It's easy to aim for the stars and fall miles short. Therefore, I recommend that you plan and organize something that appropriately fits your firm. A small firm trying to organize a huge event will probably, in the end, be overshadowed by the personnel power and money of a much larger firm. It is better to hone your message and the audience you wish to attract than it is to throw a wide net and hope to catch interested parties.

I have said all along that the IBA Annual Conference is an amazing opportunity to learn about the law that you practice, to explore areas of the law that interest you, to meet new people and forge new partnerships, and to strengthen your current alliance. Nevertheless, it is very easy to get caught off guard and waste this opportunity if you are unprepared. Don't get me wrong, by no means have I perfected my own recommendations. Having lived through it though, on several occasions now, I simply wish to share my impressions in a way that I hope will make your experience better. Let's meet again... in Tokio 2014.

Read the full article at:

<http://www.thelawyer.com/analysis/opinion/five-golden-rules-for-a-successful-iba-experience/3011149.article>

Photo Credit *International Bar Association*



Stephan Swinkels

Executive Director, L&E Global

Avenue Louise 221

1050, Brussels, Belgium

P +32 2 64 32 633

E stephan.swinkels@leglobal.org

W www.leglobal.org

