

# De Novo

Colorado Association of Legal Support Staff

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## CALSS Educational Conference To Be Held in Frisco

The Colorado Association of Legal Support Staff (CALSS) will hold its 2007-08 Third Board Meeting & Educational Conference at the Holiday Inn in Frisco, Colorado, May 30-31, 2008. The conference seminars are "Policing and Protecting Copyrights on the Internet" presented by Tim Reynolds of Holme Roberts & Owen, and "Immigration 101" presented by Phil Alterman of Stern, Elkind, Curray and Alterman. For more information, contact Karen Hartley at 719-667-7635 or [karen.hartley@elpaso.com](mailto:karen.hartley@elpaso.com).

Along with this Conference, CALSS will sponsor its annual 5K nature trek to raise funds for the Gwendolyn S. Duran Memorial Scholarship Fund. Questions about this

event may be directed to Pauli Ingwersen at 719-475-6487 or [pingwersen@hollandhart.com](mailto:pingwersen@hollandhart.com).

CALSS was incorporated as a Colorado non-profit organization in 1996. The Association is dedicated to furthering the knowledge of the law and upholding its honor and dignity, furthering the professional interests of legal support staff, establishing good fellowship among members, promoting and encouraging a spirit of loyalty and cooperation between employer and employee, and promoting a high standard of ethics among members.

For more information about the Association, visit [www.calss.org](http://www.calss.org).

## Small Talk Makes a Big Impression: How to Use Casual Conversation to Build Your Career

by Janet Ellen Raasch

A successful law career is built upon personal relationships with many people – clients, potential clients, referral sources and colleagues.

Although these relationships are often created by necessity, they are nurtured into productive maturity by small talk – conversations that take place in the minutes before and after business is conducted, in the hallway at your place of work (or potential place of work) or while interacting at a business/industry networking event.

"As a personality type, lawyers and other professional service providers are not great at making small talk," said Debra Fine. "If you ask them, they will bluntly reply: 'I chose this profession to focus on important, complex skills – not to chat.'"

"Many professional service providers (and I was one of them – an engineer) are introspective dorks who are completely comfortable talking about their area of expertise in a business setting – but completely inept when it comes to making small talk in a social setting. This can be a real professional handicap," said Fine.

Fine is a nationally recognized speaker ([www.debrafine.com](http://www.debrafine.com)) who conducts programs for Fortune 500 companies and entrepreneurs, as well as groups within the financial, legal, health care, real estate, government and engineering industries. She is author of

two books: the popular *The Fine Art of Small Talk* and the recently published *The Fine Art of the Big Talk: How to Win Clients, Deliver Great Presentations and Solve Conflicts at Work* (Hyperion). She appears regularly as a guest on national television talk shows.

Fine spoke at a program held Jan. 29 at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law. The presentation was jointly sponsored by the law school as well as the University of Wyoming College of Law, Daniels College of Business (University of Denver), Graduate School of International Studies (University of Denver) and the Legal Marketing Association Rocky Mountain Chapter ([www.rockymountainlma.com](http://www.rockymountainlma.com)).

"Each conversation, no matter how casual, is one more opportunity for success," said Fine. "Take advantage of this opportunity. Small talk is more than just chitchat. It is a valuable tool to help you climb the law firm ladder, command respect from others, widen your business and social circles, and boost your self-confidence."

### Take the risk and assume the burden

"The fine art of small talk can be mastered by anyone," said Fine. "It is not a personality trait – but a

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**From the Editor:**

In preparation for writing this month's message from the editor, I briefly glanced at my last message – and would you believe it was snowing that day too?! “Springtime in the Rockies” isn't just a catchy tune; it's actually a very unusual time of the year around here! Since temperatures can vary as much as 50 degrees in a 12-hour period, one never knows what to wear in preparation for the coming day. I've found that the solution is to pack a little something for any eventuality as I head off to work each morning.

You may notice as you read this issue that something is missing! Yes, our Grammar Queen has taken a brief hiatus – but she is expected to be back with her gems of grammar wisdom for the July issue. In the meantime, we wish Darlene a speedy recovery from her recent foot surgery.

In place of the Grammar Queen column, I've added a little Legalese quiz, which I hope you will enjoy. The answers are: 1-c); 2-a); 3-b); 4-c); 5-a); 6-c); 7-a); 8-d); 9-c); 10-b). How did you do?

The next issue of *De Novo* will be distributed in July 2008. In the meantime, I look forward to seeing many of you in Frisco the end of this month.

Cathy Hansen, PLS  
*De Novo* Editor



*De Novo* is a bi-monthly publication of the Colorado Association of Legal Support Staff (CALSS), published in odd-numbered months. The information in this publication is intended for general guidance, and should not be construed as legal advice. CALSS accepts no responsibility for loss to any person or entity as a result of action or inaction based on the use of any information in this publication.

Articles that appear in *De Novo* do not necessarily reflect the view of CALSS, nor does their publication constitute an endorsement.

An annual e-subscription to *De Novo* is provided to members of CALSS as part of their membership dues. Printed copies may be obtained from the editor.

All correspondence regarding content should be directed to the editor. Original articles may be submitted for publication, as well as reprints of previously published articles. (In the latter case, please include author and publication information so appropriate reprinting permission may be obtained.)

Deadline for submission is the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month preceding publication (i.e., December 15 for the January issue).

# Timeless Tips on Becoming a Better Leader (Part 1 of 3)

by Cathy Hansen, PLS

## Characteristics of Effective Leaders

People don't become leaders overnight. The seeds of good leadership come from a combination of personal skills, talent, and character. You shape and nurture your leadership style by strengthening your talents, working to eliminate problem behaviors and learning to develop new, more productive ones.

Some characteristics which separate leaders from followers are:

Leader	Follower
Good listener .....	Good talker
Accessible.....	Hard to find
Decisive.....	Avoids decisions
Gracious.....	Self-promoting
Keeps it simple .....	Makes it complicated
Optimistic .....	Pessimistic
Gives credit.....	Takes credit
Confronts problems .....	Avoids problems
Speaks directly.....	Manipulates
Acknowledges mistakes .....	Blames others
Says "yes".....	Says it can't be done
Enthusiastic.....	Placid
Seeks strong subordinates.....	Seeks weak subordinates
Positive attitude .....	Negative attitude

Good leaders read everything available to continuously update their skills and knowledge. If you don't have time, **make time** to read books and trade publications! Good leaders know their jobs, know the people they work with, share a vision of their association or organization, share a vision of excellence and achievement, and always remain flexible.

According to Stephen Covey, in *Principal-Centered Leadership*, characteristics of effective leaders include the following: they are continually learning; they are service-oriented; they radiate positive energy; they believe in other people; they lead balanced lives; they see life as an adventure; they are synergistic (that is, they believe the whole should equal **more** than the sum of the parts); they exercise for self-renewal.

In *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey offers the following suggestions for effective leadership:

1. Be proactive (rather than reactive).
2. Begin with the end in mind.
3. Put first things first.
4. Think "win-win."
5. Seek first to understand; then to be understood.
6. Synergize.
7. Sharpen the saw—constantly strive to improve your skills and knowledge.

Your attitude as a leader will set the pace and tone of your organization. Some tips to help maintain a positive attitude: engage in a regular exercise program; inject humor into your life and your workplace ("If you take

yourself too seriously, no one else will!"); break major goals into smaller, more easily attainable ones; take frequent, short time-outs during the day for renewal; balance work and leisure more effectively; try volunteering to add perspective and depth to your life; keep yourself looking professional; find someone you trust as a role model, confidante, and sounding board.

To be an effective leader, you should adopt a vision statement. A leader with a vision inspires and motivates; projects into the future and communicates a global outlook; obtains significant, often extraordinary results from people; is highly committed to excellence, honesty, and productivity; and is an effective listener.

"Take responsibility, and people will give you responsibility. Take responsibility for your health and well-being. Take responsibility for your work. Take responsibility for your life, the good and the bad. Take responsibility and you take the lead! Be the kind of person people can count on—and it will pay off." Daniel Maacham, *The Magic of Self-Confidence*.

## Leading Your Team

*Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing.* Albert Schweitzer, Humanitarian

Leaders inspire the best efforts of their teams in order to meet the organization's goals. Leaders have visions, goals, and objectives—teams need to be encouraged to create and accomplish their own goals and objectives.

Some characteristics of highly cohesive, successful teams are:

- ♦ Team members understand and share their leader's vision.
- ♦ Group members respect and, ideally, like each other and learn to cooperate and work with each other in a relaxed fashion.
- ♦ Individuals derive satisfaction from being a member of the team.
- ♦ Communication is open, and all members are encouraged to participate in discussions as well as decision-making, when possible.
- ♦ The group has a sense of team pride.
- ♦ There is little conflict on the team, and when conflict occurs, it is handled using constructive problem-solving techniques.
- ♦ Team recognition and credit for a good job is freely given.
- ♦ Team members understand and share common goals, objectives, and missions.

Team members have individual strengths and weaknesses. Team leaders must learn to use each team member's attributes to accomplish the common goal as efficiently as possible. Team leaders can more successfully motivate teams to perform when they make

*(continued on page 6)*

# SO . . . You're a Good Member . . . Or Are You?

by Audrey Brekel

Why is your participation important to an organization? Your ideas, suggestions and comments can benefit both the organization and you personally. Active and positive participation in your organization helps to achieve the goals of the organization, promotes the group's objectives, and improves teamwork and morale. For you personally, your involvement can help you improve or refine your skills in communication (meetings help you gain experience in expressing your thoughts and ideas) and leadership (you can learn a great deal by observing and following the actions of successful group leaders). For any organization to grow and be successful, all members need to use their talents – whatever they may be. And you just might find that you *like* being involved!

What makes a "good" member? You don't necessarily need to be the president of an organization to be a good member. A good member can take an important role in an organization by attending meetings, making others feel welcome, taking part in discussions, coming up with ideas for and planning seminars, scheduling speakers, encouraging new (and seasoned!) members to attend meetings and to become or stay active in the organization, etc.

What makes good members work together as a team for the benefit of the organization?

- ♦ Having strong leadership.
- ♦ Working toward a common goal.
- ♦ Living by the rules of the organization.
- ♦ Having an action plan for the success of your organization.
- ♦ Supporting risk taking.
- ♦ Having 100% involvement and inclusion.

As a member of an organization, you have duties and responsibilities. A few are listed here, but you may come up with more:

- ♦ Attend meetings and be on time -- if you need to RSVP for the meeting, respond in a timely manner!
- ♦ Take the time to learn parliamentary procedure. Both the presiding officer and the members should know the basic parliamentary rules necessary to make a meeting run smoothly.
- ♦ Prepare yourself for a leadership role.
- ♦ Accept committee chairmanships.
- ♦ Work harmoniously with other members to achieve the goals of the organization.
- ♦ Respect that the majority rules – then carry out the wishes of the membership, even if you were in the minority.
- ♦ Be courteous when attending meetings – listen to those speaking and wait your turn to speak.

- ♦ Be conscious of the fact that all members' rights should be protected.
- ♦ Hold the president accountable in treating members fairly and impartially.

Many years ago I came across the following poem. I have been unable to find the name of the author, but it is fitting for this article.

## WHAT KIND OF MEMBER ARE YOU?

Are you an active member --  
The kind that would be missed?  
Or are you just content  
That your name is on the list?

Do you attend the meetings  
And mingle with the flock?  
Or do you stay at home  
And criticize and knock?

Do you take an active part  
To help the work along?  
Or are you satisfied to be  
Of those that just belong?

Do you ever voluntarily  
Help at the guiding stick?  
Or leave the work to just a few  
And talk about the clique?

Come out to meetings often  
And help with hands and heart.  
Don't be just a member;  
But take an active part!

Think this over, member,  
You know right from wrong;  
Are you an active member,  
Or do you just belong?☞

*Audrey Brekel is a past president and charter member of CALSS who currently serves as parliamentarian. Audrey has earned the reputation of parliamentary guru of the association, having written a number of articles and presented many seminars on the topic. Comments and questions may be directed to [audrey.brekel@hro.com](mailto:audrey.brekel@hro.com)*



### **Small Talk** (continued from page 1)

learned skill. Once you know the rules, it just takes practice.”

Fear of starting a conversation with a stranger is second only to fear of public speaking. “Although silence in a social setting might make us feel safe, it is perceived by others as impoliteness,” said Fine. “You will be a hero if you start a conversation and you will gain stature, respect and rapport if you ‘act as host’ and keep a conversation going.”

People who excel at small talk are those who focus not on themselves and their own comfort level, but on making others feel included, valued and comfortable. “All other things being equal in a business relationship,” said Fine, “clients will build relationships with service providers who make them feel comfortable.

“It is up to each and every one of us to assume the burden of conversation in order to increase the comfort level of those with whom we are speaking,” said Fine. “We do this by coming up with topics to discuss, by remembering people’s names and introducing them to others, by relieving awkward moments and by filling pregnant pauses.”

The business/industry networking event presents the greatest challenge for making small talk – for lawyers and others. “Attend each event with a purposeful agenda,” said Fine. “Thus armed, you are less likely to take the easy way out by talking only to friends or by wandering aimlessly and unproductively.

“Do research ahead of time to generate a list of likely attendees you want to meet (or get to know better) or categories of people you would like to meet (for example, those who might need the services of an environmental litigator),” said Fine. “In addition, familiarize yourself with at least three topical subjects of conversation (the election, the big game, a new movie or TV show) you can discuss in a pinch.”

At the event, find an approachable person (often someone standing alone), make eye contact, smile, extend your hand and introduce yourself. Remember the person’s name and use it repeatedly in the conversation.

“If you cannot remember the name of a person you’ve met before, do not avoid the person,” said Fine. “The person will think you are being rude. Approach, smile, extend your hand, re-introduce yourself (give ‘the gift of your name’) and apologize for not remembering theirs.”

After the introduction, start a conversation by using icebreaking questions. These should go beyond “How’s it going?” or “What’s up?” – which have become the equivalent of “hello” and usually elicit in response a dead-end “fine” or “not much.” Good questions should be open-ended (not answerable by a simple “yes” or “no”) and can include:

- ♦ Questions about the location or the occasion
- ♦ Questions about the person’s job or employer
- ♦ Questions about the sponsoring organization

Icebreaking questions can also be inspired by a pin or a nametag or a logo item that a person is wearing or carrying.

Keep the conversation going by listening for clues in your conversation partner’s answer to your icebreaking question and using this information to “dig in deeper.”

As the conversation continues, be sure to “play the conversation game” – tossing the conversation back and forth and carrying your fair share of the burden. If someone asks you a question, provide a “rich” answer that allows them the chance to dig in deeper.

### **Be an attentive listener**

When engaging in small talk, be an attentive listener by focusing attention on your conversation partner with your body, your words and your mind.

“Research shows that others form an opinion of you based on your behavior,” said Fine, “even more than what you actually say. Keep your face friendly, maintain eye contact and nod in response to your partner’s conversation. Do not look around the room.”

Express verbal attention with comments like “I see,” “How interesting,” or “That must have been a challenge,” or by asking questions that “dig in deeper” and show that you are focused and paying attention. Express mental attention by not letting your mind wander and by not responding to a cell phone or other device.

To exit a conversation gracefully, rely on the agenda you created ahead of time. Say “I promised myself that I would meet so-and-so tonight. Do you know where she is?” or “I am trying to meet people in the environmental industry. Do you know anyone?” Or simply excuse yourself with the need to freshen your drink, get something to eat, see the exhibits or say hi to a friend.

“Thank the person for the conversation, mentioning something in particular that you enjoyed discussing,” said Fine. “Then, make sure that you actually do what you said you were going to do in exiting the conversation. If you get sidetracked, you run the very real risk of insulting your former conversation partner. The relationship will not recover.”

These same skills work for a lawyer making small talk in the time before or after a business meeting or a job interview. “In these situations, look for clues in the physical environment that can provide the basis for icebreaking questions,” said Fine. These can include diplomas, awards, objects of art (including children’s art), sports gear, photos, and books, newspapers and magazines.

“Each and every casual conversation is an opportunity for success,” said Fine. “By knowing and practicing these skills, anyone can use the art of small talk to create and nurture relationships – and achieve professional success.”

*Janet Ellen Raasch is a writer and ghostwriter who works closely with lawyers, law firms and other professional services providers to help them achieve name recognition and new business through publication of articles and books for print and rich content for the Internet. She can be reached at (303) 399-5041 or [jeraasch@msn.com](mailto:jeraasch@msn.com).*



### Timeless Tips (continued from page 3)

the effort to match assignments to personalities. Different types of team members and some of their traits are:

- ♦ The *Traditional Team Player* prefers a secure situation, is drawn to close relationships, changes slowly, is predictable, patient, and possessive, likes an easy-going, relaxed atmosphere, supports the status quo, looks for loyalty, views the team as important, and likes to identify with the organization.
- ♦ The *Analytical Team Player* likes established operating procedures, does not like sudden change, believes that precision works, is accurate at all costs, has very high standards for self and others, tends to worry, holds back opinions unless certain they are right, takes a rational, problem-solving approach to tasks, and is conventional, conscientious, and a slow decision-maker.
- ♦ The *Dominating Team Player* likes prestige and position, is easily bored, likes challenge and change, measures worth in terms of accomplishments, likes direct answers from others, does not like to be controlled by others, has high self-assurance, plays a game to win, is very assertive and decisive, a good risk-taker, quick and impatient, and forceful and demanding.
- ♦ The *Charismatic Team Player* thrives on popularity and social recognition, likes freedom from detail and control, uses intuition well, is sympathetic, friendly, trusting, and enthusiastic, uses verbal skills well, is good at charming and persuading people, acts impulsively and emotionally, and is confident and comfortable with self-promotion.

At all costs, team leaders must remember and follow the Seven Basics of Team Leadership:

1. Treat all members equally and give each personal attention as required.
2. Keep the promises you make to all team members.
3. Be consistent and act positively, even if you feel negative.
4. Set a good example and support organization policies and procedures.
5. Stay calm. Understand that others tend to imitate a leader's reactions under pressure.
6. Provide opportunities to meet and exchange ideas with team members.
7. Make sure all team goals are clearly communicated and understood.

Next issue: Part 2: Planning Tools and Problem Solving.☞

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## Articles Wanted for *De Novo*

*De Novo* is currently seeking legal educational articles for the July and September 2008 issues. Articles should be two to four pages in length, and should be submitted in Word (.doc) or Rich Text (.rtf) format. Questions may be directed to Cathy Hansen, *De Novo* Editor, at 303-965-8088 or [cathy.hansen@qwest.com](mailto:cathy.hansen@qwest.com).

## The Power of Words

Have you ever been involved in a conversation where another person misused a word? Have you ever used words when you're not sure of their meaning? Have you ever gotten confused in a conversation because you didn't know the meaning of a word the other person was using?

One of the most powerful tools you can possess is a rich vocabulary and a basic understanding of how to use it. *Reader's Digest* used to (and perhaps still does) run a series of articles by Peter Funk entitled "It Pays to Enrich Your Word Power." Picking up on Mr. Funk's idea, I've put together a little quiz – with a definite slant toward Legalese – so you can test your own mastery over the English language. (Answers appear on page 2.)

1. **mitigation** – a) a manner in which a thing is done; b) mixture or confusion of goods; c) alleviation of a penalty or punishment; d) false and malicious statement.
2. **indefeasible** – a) that which cannot be defeated, revoked, or made void; b) without fixed boundaries or distinguishing characteristics; c) without hurt, harm, or damage; d) not subject to control
3. **ratification** – a) deliberate, organized resistance; b) confirmation of a previous act; c) renewal of amicable relations; d) payment for an injury.
4. **exclusion** – a) out of courtesy; b) sentence of censure; c) denial of entry or admittance; d) lending additional support.
5. **felony** – a) crime of grave nature; b) thief caught in possession of stolen goods; c) lesser offense often punishable by fine; d) dereliction from duty.
6. **overt** – a) proven guilty or convicted; b) loaded too heavily; c) open, manifest, public; d) to the exterior of.
7. **sequester** – a) to separate or isolate; b) capable of being separated; c) individual, distinct, disconnected; d) decree of separation.
8. **dormant** – a) completed; b) feebleness of mental faculties; c) a system of bookkeeping; d) in abeyance.
9. **guarantee** – a) type of lease arrangement; b) he who makes a guaranty; c) one to whom a guaranty is made; d) making a bet.
10. **de novo** – a) one who derives support from another; b) a second time; c) in the discharge of ordinary duty; c) to give a negative answer.

Source: *Black's Law Dictionary*, Fifth Edition (1979).☞