No Excuses—Dive In

By R. Craig Mayfield

Committee involvement is your best platform for pursuing DRI leadership positions, and for building relationships with fellow members and industry leaders throughout the country.

As a young, second-year lawyer (seems oh-so-long-ago), I recall my first DRI Young Lawyers Committee exposure. Pitched by my firm as a nice reward for hard work, to a premier resort location (the Arizona Biltmore), I embarked excitedly to attend the Young Lawyers Committee’s annual seminar (with primary goals and objectives of golf and time by the pool). Almost a decade later, I now sit as committee chair to pen the annual introduction article to our committee’s edition of For The Defense. Time truly flies.

Traditionally, this article serves to detail the overwhelming and impressive list of activities and accomplishments of our committee, the manner in which we contribute to the overall structure of DRI, and the benefits of active membership. The article typically concludes with a subtle encouragement for managing and supervising partners to continue supporting DRI’s Young Lawyers Committee by signing your qualifying lawyers (10 years of practice or less) up for membership and sending them to the committee’s seminar.

Rather than conclude with that sentiment this year, let me emphasize it up front. There are many ways that DRI can benefit your practice, the scope of your networking platform, and your quality of life/friends/colleagues. The most likely manner in which to maximize those potential benefits is to jump in early. This summer, the Young Lawyers Seminar will be held June 13-15 at the Eden Roc hotel in Miami Beach, Florida. The faculty will include in-house speakers from Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd., Assurant Employee Benefits, Baxter International, and J&J. In addition to world-class continuing education credits, the Young Lawyers Seminar offers small-scale networking opportunities with fellow lawyers and in-house professionals that simply don’t exist at larger DRI committee seminars.

Perhaps more importantly, it is your best platform for stepping into the leadership of DRI substantive committees. The business meeting at each year’s seminar provides detailed information on how to apply for steering committee opportunities within the young lawyers structure, many of which result in direct contact and leadership roles within the substantive committees that correspond to the young lawyer’s practice areas. There simply is no better way to immerse yourself in the opportunities provided by the Young Lawyers Committee than to attend the seminar, and if you are a young lawyer reading this, or a managing or supervising partner responsible for young lawyers in your firm, I hope the first thing you will do is visit dri.org and sign up to attend, or encourage your colleagues to do so.

What can you look forward to upon “diving in”? Why is DRI, and more specifically the Young Lawyers Committee, the best value out of all the professional organizations out there? That one is easy to answer by simply highlighting what it is that we do. Aside from the pride our committee takes in facilitating a new lawyer’s entry into, and participation in, the larger professional organization, the relationships built through participation in our committee have long-lasting, bottom-line impact. Two years ago, we endeavored to find just how much work was being referred among young lawyer committee members. The numbers were astounding. Over 50 percent of attendees who attended the Young Lawyers Seminar referred work to another committee member. Over 50 percent.

Those types of relationships are built through cooperation with members and industry leaders throughout the country, on any number of tasks. DRI’s young lawyers provide the general DRI membership with regular monitoring of legislative developments in all 50 states, and analysis of U.S. Supreme Court decisions. Young lawyers serve on the national steering committee of virtually every single substantive committee within the DRI structure, assisting with membership efforts, seminar planning, public service project organization, and networking gatherings. And while we are emphasizing the opportunities created by our committee, let’s not overlook the publication you have in your hands right now. During an economic period where value-based marketing opportunities are emphasized everywhere, you will find in this publication 10 separate articles authored by Young Lawyer Committee members. These types of publications opportunities are routinely funneled to our committee membership—opportunities you simply don’t have anywhere else.

As my time comes to an end in this committee, I move on to my substantive DRI committee having made lifetime friendships, developed networking and referral sources, and more importantly, as a better and more profitable lawyer. I can assure you my firm values the return they’ve gotten on each and every dollar spent to support me in my time with DRI’s young lawyers. Now is not the time to cut back on your expenditures in these arenas, but to better focus on the value and return you get on what dollars you do spend. Look no further.

I look forward to seeing you or your associates in June in Miami.