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CLE on the Web: An Early Report Card

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Our August issue reported how firms are using technology internally to support their in-house professional development programs. For this issue, we investigated firms' experience with external CLE courses offered on the Internet – that is, whether and how firms are using online CLE and what they think of it.

Who Is Providing Online CLE

Online CLE is still a new phenomenon. Many providers, perhaps most, have gone online only in the past two years. Some are solidly established CLE providers such as the American Bar Association's CLE Center, ALI-ABA (one of the newest online entrants), Practising Law Institute, and numerous state bars including California, New York, and Texas. These providers have added Web-based courses as just one more option in an already broad array of offerings and, for the most part, have put out their usual fine product in this new medium. Others, newcomers to the CLE scene, are exclusively on line. In this group, course quality is sometimes excellent but not consistently so.

In many cases, competition and the economies of mass distribution over the Web have resulted in extraordinarily low tuition fees, as low as \$25 for a course.

Interestingly, more than one provider claims on its web site to be "the" leading source for online CLE. So another goal we set was to identify the true leader of the pack.

The names and URL's of all the online providers identified in the survey are listed in the Directory of Online CLE Providers at the end of this article.

What Is Available On Line

Two broad types of CLE product can be found on the Web:

1. Live courses, scheduled either
 - (a) on a set day and time, for anywhere from an hour to a day, such as the live "webcasts" put on by the American Bar Association and the National Practice Institute (these are comparable to a live satellite broadcast or telephone conference and require audio and/or video capabilities in the receiving computer); or
 - (b) over a longer period, typically two or three weeks, such as the online seminars given by CLEOnline and Law.com. In this type of course the discussion may be text-based, although video and audio content is increasingly being incorporated as well.

The latter, "asynchronous" format permits attendees to participate at their convenience during the period the course is offered, going online periodically to download the previous discussion and

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submitting any comments or questions of their own at that time; whereas in format (a) they must be present and online at the time the program is broadcast.

2. Pre-recorded courses, either

(a) archived versions of live on-site seminars or webcasts, usually incorporating audio and/or video; or

(b) courses specifically designed and recorded for delivery over the web, ranging from text-based to full multimedia and often incorporating a testing component.

Pre-recorded courses are available on demand "24/7"; that is, on any day and time the lawyer chooses to go online and take them. Virtually all online providers offer one or both types of pre-recorded courses.

In addition, some providers have begun to offer a hybrid product, with a live moderator guiding participants through pre-recorded content at a scheduled time.

Who Is Using Online CLE

Training directors at five firms, all of them mega-firms with 500-1500 lawyers and multiple offices, responded to our survey.¹ Large, multi-office firms are most likely to use technology in general to support office-wide communications and learning, and for such firms online CLE seems a natural next step. Indeed, several directors at

slightly smaller firms told us they could not respond because their firms are not presently doing anything in this area.

Our five respondents would seem to be the ground-breakers. While not even remotely statistically significant,² their responses share useful information and experience for the benefit of other firms that may be considering online CLE involvement.

The Pluses of Online CLE

Our respondents cited four major benefits of online CLE compared to traditional classroom-based courses:

- convenience,
- availability of CLE credit,
- availability of topics not offered in house, and
- low cost.

What they said about it:

"For some, it is a more convenient way to earn MCLE credit."

"Our attorneys are very receptive to the idea of collecting CLE credits easily and whenever they want to (3 a.m., if they choose), and on very specialized topics where in-house programs are not offered."

"Several providers offer courses priced around \$25 per credit hour."

When we asked which of their lawyers stood to get the most benefit from online CLE, the directors said:

"Lawyers who don't take the time to come to live programs, lawyers in smaller offices or in geographic regions where CLE programs are not otherwise offered (like international offices)."

"Our CA and NY Bar members overseas benefit the most from Web-based CLE. There are not many opportunities to earn participatory CA credit or NY credit in Asia and Europe."

"Traveling attorneys."

¹Our grateful appreciation goes to our colleagues in the Professional Development Consortium, of which all the survey respondents are members.

²We note in particular that individual lawyers whose firms do not offer substantial in-house CLE programming are probably more likely to use online CLE on their own than the lawyers at our respondents' firms.

Asked if they encouraged their lawyers to use online CLE and, if so, why, they said:

“I encourage it as a solution to an MCLE problem.”

“Yes, to supplement our existing schedule and to provide CLE credits for attorneys in our international offices.”

“Yes, to help fill the CLE hours and any additional training needed.”

Two directors who did not participate in the survey expressed doubt that lawyers would participate in online CLE at all in the absence of CLE credit.

The Minuses of Online CLE

The downsides, at least for now, are:

- inconsistent quality of instruction
- negative attitudes of some lawyers
- restrictions on CLE credit by some bars
- technology problems: incompatibility, breakdowns, lack of technical support

Here are the comments:

“[Some] providers offer some quality programs, but because they obtain their content from many sources, there are some questionable courses available. These providers need to do a better job of screening their content.”

“Most attorneys will not use these courses for *learning*. They would likely attend a live seminar, do research, or ask a colleague if they need to learn about a specific topic.”

“[T]he lawyers don’t want to use it and complain about the testing and other problems, the providers don’t have that much stuff or that many CLE states covered, and they aren’t that much help with problems.”

“More than two hours is too long.”

“I do not encourage [online CLE] as a source for learning. We have a strong commitment to our in-house training programs and recommend those training opportunities first.”

“We [encourage online CLE]. However, the restrictions on the amounts of CLE that can be earned and applied limits some users.”

As to technology, because some bars give credit for online CLE only if it includes audio and/or video, providers

have responded with multimedia courses that strain many users’ computer capabilities. One exasperated respondent laid out the technology problems in some detail:

“Technical problems:

- Real Player is not an accepted installation at our firm.
- Most lawyers don’t have sound on their computers.
- Computer configurations make use problematic.
- Firewall and bandwidth problems.
- Lawyers aren’t [computer proficient].

“Most of our lawyers who use it use their home computers. That raises other problems:

- Technical problems at the provider end do occur.
- Customer Service lines aren’t open 24/7.”

And Now, the Envelope Please...

In our effort to identify the “leader of the pack,” we asked respondents to identify (a) which online providers they are using, (b) which offer the highest instructional quality, and (c) which offer the best value in terms of tuition paid vs. instructional value received.

On two of our three criteria, (a) usage and (b) instructional quality, *Practising Law Institute* topped the respondents’ lists. PLI is the only provider whose online courses 4 out of the 5 responding firms are sponsoring on an institutional basis, and three of those named PLI best for instructional quality. (The fourth said its association with PLI had just begun.)³ The remaining firm said that for instructional quality they found “All [providers are] about the same – we are still looking for a provider to stand out.”

Besides PLI, other providers with which responding firms have entered into institutional commitments are Taecan.com (“for a block of credit hours at a discounted price”) and Cognistar (for “2 months of unlimited access” for a flat fee).

On our third criterion, (c) best value, *Taecan.com* and *Law.com* were the only providers identified, but with reservations:

³PLI tells us firms can purchase a stand-alone Web Subscription for its online courses, or they can combine a Web Subscription with a Privileged Membership to give firm lawyers access to virtually all PLI programs (except co-sponsored ones) for a flat annual fee.

"Taecan.com has programs from different Bars and associations, and some have high quality content. Their programs are the best value, if the attorney selects a course from a high quality provider (i.e. State Bar of California)."

"Law.com, although their course list is still too small for our purposes."

Reflections on Online Learning and Mandatory CLE

We feel obliged to confess here our bias against technology-delivered learning. It comes from long experience with in-house training, from seeing the tremendous value of face-to-face interchange among presenters and participants in a lively, well-structured learning experience. It probably also has something to do with personal preference and with resistance to change. (Besides, we would miss the great food.)

The responses to this survey and the August technology survey indicate that many lawyers and professional development directors share that preference.

At the same time, we believe that online CLE offers a valuable educational option for people who can't access the content any other way, for any of a variety of reasons including time, cost, physical disability, or geographic location.

We therefore find it troubling that currently many lawyers appear to view online CLE as having minimal relevance to actual learning -- as existing mainly to pick up MCLE credits with the least possible investment of time and money, preferably at the last minute in the wee hours of the morning. (We picture some groggy lawyer forcing down two bitter pills, computer-based training and mandatory CLE, in one gulp and trudging back to bed.)

Another troubling aspect of the current situation is that online CLE is potentially a huge cash cow for providers. It's been said that in the classroom, bad training can be delivered to 20 to 50 people, while on the Web it can be delivered to thousands. Producing high quality training in any medium is hard and expensive. If large numbers of practitioners approach the online learning experience with no expectation but garnering a few CLE credits, providers will have little incentive to produce top-quality courses.

Further on the quality issue, we think some CLE Boards are on the wrong track. It's not high-tech bells and whistles like sound and video that assure course quality --

even though they may better simulate the "feel" of traditional instruction -- but good content and learning design.⁴ For example, we heard great things about CLE Online's first on-line seminars, which were text-based discussions with live faculty extending over several weeks. Now it appears they've acceded to some CLE Boards' requirements and started putting archived audio and video courses on the Web as well. The losers may be the practitioners who have to take the archived courses if they want credit (and struggle with plug-in downloads and computer crashes in the process).

There are some wonderfully well-done online courses. As good CLE providers gain experience in this new medium and as lawyers gain skill and confidence on the Web, there will be more of them. We believe online CLE should and will occupy an important niche in the professional development strategies of lawyers and firms as the available choices grow in quality and quantity.

Directory of Online CLE Providers

Within each category, the providers are listed in descending order of the number of responding firms who identified each provider as one they and/or their lawyers use for online courses:

1. General CLE Providers (develop and/or deliver online courses on a variety of topics):

Practising Law Institute (www.pli.edu) (4 firms)

Taecan.com (www.taecan.com) (3)

Cognistar (www.cognistar.com) (2)

Law.com seminars (store.law.com/seminars/) (2)

ALI-ABA (www.ali-aba.org) (1)

American Bar Association Center for Continuing Legal Education (www.abanet.org/cle) (1)

CLE Online (www.cleonline.com) (1)

National Practice Institute (www.npilaw.com) (1)

Rutter Group (www.rutteronline.com) (1)

WestLegalEdCenter.com

(www.westlegaledcenter.com) (1)

EON! Education Over the Net!

⁴See "MCLE Summit 2001" in the Professional Developments column on page 9 for recent policy recommendations from major CLE providers.

(www.eondirect.com) (0)
Lawline.com (www.lawline.com) (0)
LawyersEd.Com (www.lawyersed.com) (0)
LegalSpan.com (www.legalspan.com) (0)
Lexis CLE Center (clecenter.lexis.com/clecenter) (0)
WebCE (www.webCE.com) (0)

2. Specialty CLE Providers (develop and deliver online courses in one or a few topic areas)

FindLaw - internet legal research tutorials
(www.findlaw.com) (1)

ESI International - primarily government contracts
and construction law (www.esi-intl.com) (0)

Internet Legal Education and Development, Inc. -
primarily law practice management (www.ilead.com)
(0)

LegalEdnet.com - insurance law
(www.legalednet.com) (0)

TrialTactics.com - trial practice
(www.TrialTactics.com) (0)

TRT, Inc. - primarily ethics and professionalism
(www.trt-cle.com) (0)

3. Bar Providers (State bars or bar-affiliated providers that offer web-based programming for members)

Texas (www.texasbar.com) (2)

California (www.calbar.org) (1)
New York (www.nysba.org) (1)

Alaska (www.alaskabar.org) (0)
Arizona (www.azbar.org) (0)
Florida (www.flabar.org) (0)
Missouri (www.mobar.org) (0)
North Carolina (www.ncbar.org) (0)
Ohio (www.ohiobar.org) (0)
Virginia CLE (www.vacle.org) (0)
Washington (www.wsba.org) (0)

Tracking Systems, Part 5: Practical Tips, Enhancements, and Lessons Learned

Dottie Palazzo

This article is the fifth in a series on developing an in-house CLE tracking system. The previous articles covered "getting started" (August 2000), creating and using activity reports (February 2001), and maintaining information on people (November 2000) and programs (May 2001).

At the time Article #4 was going to press, we were in "negotiations" with our IT people on what "Bug Fixes" and enhancements could be done this year. Next week we will begin testing that work, so it seems like a good time to write about Practical Tips, Enhancements and Lessons Learned.

We started talking to our IT people about fixing "bugs" - things that did not work as we planned or expected. But

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once we got started talking about using the system, about problems we had experienced, and about what had changed in CLE since we went online with our system, we quickly began to focus on enhancements. I am going to cover a few things, both bugs and enhancements, that resulted from our current work.

Firm Logo: In the initial development of our tracking system, we thought it would be fun to include our firm logo on some of our reports. In the interim the logo was slightly changed and registered for trademark, so in this series of enhancements the logo had to be updated. Not hard to do but a silly little detail that could have been avoided.

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Time Zones: Program start time is one of the pieces of program information that needs to be recorded. Some states require that the start time be shown on CLE materials and certainly if you are using your database to populate a calendar, you need to display the start time. Initially we were working with live programs. If a live program was being conducted in Cleveland, obviously the time entered was Eastern Standard Time. Well, as we all know, we are now dealing with videoconferencing to multiple locations not necessarily in the same time zone. In fact, probably in multiple time zones. Now a start time for a live program in Cleveland that is videoconferenced in Los Angeles could be confusing to Los Angeles attendees. They could turn up for the program three hours late, after the program is over. That happened.

Adding a time zone field became a high priority enhancement. Do you have any idea how many time zones there are? What a drop-down table that makes! We thought about adding a feature that would adjust the time displayed on the calendar to the time zone of the location of the person looking at the calendar. That is possible to do but we have shelved that idea for reconsideration in a future phase.

Moveable Feast: On the subject of start time, having your program database tied to the firm's program calendar can cause a maintenance problem if the time of the program is changed. For example, we do a series of training sessions in nine or more offices. When the dates and locations are determined and the schedule distributed, a suggested start time is included. However, some offices prefer a different start time depending on what else is going on in that office. If we enter those programs with the suggested start time, we are going to be wrong with respect to some offices. So we opt to fill in no start time until we get the final schedules from each office.

Same is true of the conference room, only worse. Training sessions are often bumped from one conference room to another, right up to the last minute. The maintenance of this kind of information on the database is a constant headache. Whoever is administering the session can easily notify the registrants but may not advise us. And if they do, we may not have staff or time to update the database. It is wonderful to provide as much information as possible but if you cannot maintain it once it is up, you may just be posting misinformation, which is worse than no information. I don't have an answer to this. We record as much information as we responsibly can and then struggle to keep it up to date.

Postponed or Canceled Programs: When we initially developed our system we selected an icon to indicate on the calendar grid that a program was postponed or canceled. The selection was made on the last program entry screen in the database. After working with the database, we discovered that was not sufficient. The icon did not show on the program detail displayed on the calendar and it did not show on the first program screen on the database. If someone called to ask about a program or we were looking for information ourselves, it was too hard to determine from the database whether it was canceled or what. We added a postponed/canceled field on the first program entry screen. If selected, postponed/canceled displays on the program detail on the calendar.

Populating a firm-accessible calendar from your database means you have to consider what questions the readers may have and provide that information. My focus is always on stopping the phone calls!

Open or Dynamic Entry Fields: When we developed our system, our developer used dynamic entry fields for some information. She did this to minimize the maintenance of drop-down tables. Bad plan! If we enter something by mistake in one of those fields, it becomes a part of the drop-down table for that field forevermore. Only way to get it off is for our tech support person to identify the program in which the error was made so we can go back and remove the erroneous entry. Avoid using this kind of entry field.

Status Reports for Others: Our status report was designed for use only for lawyers currently employed by the firm. At the time that seemed sufficient. In practice we discovered that former employees often asked for a report of credits earned during their time with us. We could only run that report by changing that person on our system back to being an employee. Trouble is we then had to change them back to an "Other," and if we got interrupted by a phone call or an emergency, that second change might not happen. In this round of enhancements we have changed the status report to run for anyone on the system.

Methods of Delivery: I spoke before about separating methods of delivery from categories of credit to allow for accurate entry of credits. An example is ethics carryover credits. Ethics is the category of credit and carryover is the method of delivery. For ethics self-study credit, ethics is the category of credit but self-study is the method of delivery. This is really important in recording lawyer credits in states which limit the number of hours a

lawyer can count toward his requirement in certain categories of credit or by certain methods of delivery. We have established a drop-down table of methods for each state that we can use in recording program credits and credits earned by each lawyer.

This has become especially important now that we are offering teleconference, videoconference and online training, as some of these methods are either not allowed at all in some states or are limited.

State Compliance Dates Auto Upgrades: I can hardly believe that when we initially developed our tracking system I deliberately chose to do certain maintenance myself, rather than have this built into the system. Two of those functions are updating state compliance period dates and computing the proration of lawyer CLE requirements when a lawyer is admitted after a compliance period has begun. At the time we didn't have as many lawyers nor did we have as many MCLE states. I made those decisions because state requirements were subject to change, and I felt I would lose my familiarity with the current dates and provisions of the rules if we went automatic. Now I am living to regret that choice, especially with New York's monthly compliance period updates. Automatic updating would be a slicker system, and it is on our list of future enhancements.

Lawyers Enter Own Outside Program Credits: Our system does not allow lawyers to enter their own credits for outside programs, and my people spend a lot of time entering this information. At the time we developed our system there were not many options. But now some online program providers are also offering CLE tracking systems. In addition, there are some off-the-shelf tracking systems available for this purpose. One of my next projects is to pursue integrating one of those systems with our system so that lawyers or their secretaries can enter outside program credits themselves and have those entries included in the status reports produced from our tracking system. I will get back to you on how that goes.

Bug Fixes: We had lots of little things to fix: cursor not in the right field; cleanup of prompts because they are unclear, in the wrong place, or not needed; report displays being changed from key number order to chronological order; adding sort fields to some reports, etc.. You just don't know how some things are going to work until you work with them.

New York Annual Report Form: An enhancement we are adding is a report format to provide for the New York Annual Report. We have not yet gone to an

electronic program evaluation process so we cannot complete that portion of the report. But our computer can provide most information required by New York on a facsimile of the New York annual report form. Now let's hope New York does not change its report format for a long time.

New York Newly Admitted Requirement Credit

Allocation Form: This is a biggie for us. We do a lot of new associate training during the first year with the firm. Much of that training occurs prior to admission in New York but it can be counted toward the 16 prior-to-admission credits New York newly admitted lawyers may count toward their first year's requirement. We have spent countless hours working up credit reports for these lawyers. It seemed there had to be a better way.

One of the enhancements we will be testing next week is a report format designed to allocate and display credits available for the three applicable time periods, i.e., prior to admission limited to 16, first year after admission, and second year after admission. We also added a state "N5" to our database, to which we have assigned the New York newly admitted categories of credit. We will use that "state" to record program attendance by new associates in our New York office prior to their admission. The N5 credits will provide the prior to admission information displayed in the report. Sounds complicated and it is. I will be happy to share this report and how it works with anyone who is interested.

Lessons Learned: You are never done, whether you are building your own or buying. There are constant changes. New methods of delivery of training are emerging. State CLE rules are constantly changing, especially with respect to the new methods of delivery. The available technology keeps changing.

Even the face of your firm isn't static. Features you could not do a few years ago may now be possible. For example, when we designed our system it was not possible for lawyers at their desktops to access their own status reports from our Oracle database.

That was our impossible dream. But that very thing is now on our enhancements list because I was told that in a few months it may be possible.

Lesson: Don't limit your dreams and don't shut up about them. If some feature will be helpful to your administration or to your lawyers, keep asking until you get a "yes."



(Editor's Note: This column highlights best practices and new approaches to common challenges of in-house training managers. We invite your comments and your suggestions for future articles. You can reach us at (703) 719-7030 or marag@profdev.com.)

Bring Training Alive by Getting Down to Cases

A big reason for the long-standing popularity of the type of trial skills training originated by the National Institute for Trial Advocacy is NITA's "learning by doing" approach. At the heart of that approach is the case: a hypothetical lawsuit, complete with plaintiff, defendant, and underlying facts, that allows lawyers to role-play making arguments and taking or defending testimony, thereby applying the skills taught in the lecture and demonstration portions of the course.

Real or hypothetical scenarios are powerful training tools for all skills, not just trial skills. They reinforce and enrich learning by bringing general concepts down to earth and letting people try them out, by letting them experience how the principles apply in different types of real-world situations. They get people engaged and bring training sessions alive.

Unfortunately, too many training programs neglect the power of "getting down to cases." Such "cases" can be created from scratch, drawn from firm files, or bought from a CLE provider. They can range from a few sentences to a few pages, from a simple question to a professionally videotaped role play. A few examples I have used or seen in use:

- In a workshop for new mentors, posing hypothetical problems drawn from actual occurrences at the firm and having the mentors strategize on how to handle them. One such problem: "Your new associate mentee, inexperienced and rushing against a deadline, made a serious mistake on a project. Word has gotten around, and now other partners are not willing to entrust him or her with a significant assignment."
- In ethics training, using videotaped vignettes of hypothetical ethical dilemmas to illustrate the principles and provoke discussion. High quality, off-the-shelf tapes are available for this purpose from a number of providers, including the ABA's Professionalism Department, NYU and Emory Law Schools (from Professors Stephen Gillers and

Timothy Terrell, respectively), and the Chief Justice of Georgia's Commission on Professionalism.

- In substantive law training, using a post-mortem of one of the practice group's recent cases as a training tool. Even the much-maligned "war stories" are valuable when they have a lesson to teach – but even more valuable when training participants are invited to develop their own solution to the original problem.
- In evaluator or supervisor training, presenting a scripted role play of a hypothetical associate evaluation or feedback session and having the participants critique it. Prepared scripts permit the participants themselves to play the roles, or faculty can play them, or you can videotape the role play in advance.

The RIPS Rule

The ideal case for a training session "rips". That is, it is:

Relevant. The case needs to be relevant both to the principles being taught in the course and to the participants' situation. That is, even a hypothetical case should portray a problem the participants are already dealing with or will likely have to deal with, and that the principles taught in the course can be usefully applied to. The mentor's problem illustrated above might be one example.

Interesting. Using cases that are timely and meaningful, that touch on issues or entities the participants care about, will promote their involvement. A course on understanding financial statements, for example, might ask participants to analyze a balance sheet from the annual report of a company currently in the news or of a leading client of the firm.

Plausible. This can especially be a problem with outside training materials. For example, one otherwise excellent

outside trainer had developed a role play of a third-year associate being evaluated on his courtroom skills, for use in training evaluators in a firm where even the most senior associates rarely appeared in court. We rewrote the script. Had the original role play been used, the lawyers would have ridiculed it (privately – they were polite people!), and the credibility of the trainer and the course would have been damaged.

Simple. The case should not be too complicated or fact-intensive. You don't want to confuse people, nor to

require them to put too much time and energy into understanding the case itself. This is why the cases used in trial skills training, for example, have simple legal issues and fact patterns, so the participants can focus their energies on learning trial skills instead of on learning the law and facts of the case.

– Gaye Mara

Professional Developments

Terrorism Aftermath Programming. Both PLI and the ABA have added some very timely live programming to their schedules. These courses are listed in the CLE Calendar below under "General Law/Multiple Topics."

On November 15-16, PLI is holding a live program in New York on "The Aftermath of Terrorism: Confronting the Legal Issues." It will also be webcast online at www.pli.edu. Attendance in either venue is free. The course will address a range of issues: crisis management; issues in the airline, insurance, corporate/securities and real estate industries; bankruptcy and doing business with troubled companies; new challenges in immigration, privacy, and civil liberties; and helping individual clients with solvency, insurance, and estate administration issues. For more information, contact Justin Laman, 212-824-5730, jlaman@pli.edu.

On December 19 at 12 noon ET, the topic for ABA's monthly "ABA Connection" teleconference has been changed to "Representing Military Reservists." All ABA Connection seminars are free to ABA members, and each relates to an article in the current issue of *The ABA Journal*.

To assist those affected by the events in New York, ABA is also offering complimentary access to its pre-recorded online audio course, *Telecommuting for Lawyers: How to Develop a Successful and Profitable Telecommuting Program*. To take the course, go to <https://www.abanet.org/cle/ecle/t01tlhi/t01tlhired.html>.

Fulcrum Information Services, which in recent years put on regular conferences across the country on law

firm management and professional development topics, has closed up shop. Fulcrum was acquired by Caliber Learning Network this past March; in July Caliber filed for bankruptcy. Many of Fulcrum's former staff have found (or perhaps built) a home at **EEI Conferences** in New York, a new affiliate of Executive Enterprise Institute. They have already announced a series of educational conferences in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and other cities for law and accounting firms. Call Shari Doulman at 212-601-8200 for more information.

Hildebrandt Institute has teamed with Columbia Business School to produce a workshop in New York November 1-3 on *Leading and Managing the 21st Century Law Firm*. The workshop is scheduled to be repeated November 7-9, 2002. More information is available at www.hildebrandt.com/institute.

Training Magazine's 25th Annual Conference and Expo will take place in Atlanta February 18-20. A huge conference agenda is augmented with 30 pre- and post-conference workshops on February 16, 17, and 21. The wide range of topics covered includes Presentation and Facilitation Skills, Training Design and Evaluation, and E-Learning Best Practices (the latter presented by IBM's Director of Management Development). But our favorite is the February 19 keynote on "How to Make People Like You in 90 Seconds or Less." Tuition for the 3-day conference is \$795-995; for the optional workshops, which range from ½ day to 2 days, it is \$245-695. For information or to register, call 301-694-5243 or 866-693-1007, or e-mail training@vnuexpo.com.

sMCLE Watch

MCLE Summit 2001. In March of this year, representatives of some top nationwide CLE providers met in Chicago to review the various states' conflicting and complicated accreditation regimes for technology-based CLE and to develop a uniform policy recommendation. The meeting was called by the former chair of the ABA Standing Committee on Continuing Education of the Bar, and members of that Committee attended. Other ABA units represented were the Bar Services Division, Center for Continuing Legal Education, Commission on Mental and Physical Disability Law, and Justice Center. Also represented were ALI-ABA, the Association for Continuing Legal Education (ACLEA), the Practising Law Institute (PLI), and the Professional Development Consortium (for in-house providers).

A white paper came out of the meeting. It is published on the ABA's web site at www.abanet.org/cle/. The paper outlines the ways in which technology-based CLE can replicate the features of in-person seminars and summarizes the accreditation approaches of the various MCLE states. The signatories' bottom line, stated in the "Position" detailed on the first page, is to "encourage all MCLE jurisdictions to fully approve and accredit the range of formats comprising technology-based CLE."

We applaud the providers' objective of bringing some order to the chaos and can sympathize with the administrative burden involved in getting course

approvals from 40 different accrediting regimes with widely different policies. The conflicting policies also complicate life for lawyers with multiple bar admissions. At the same time, we think such an all-inclusive standard as the providers seem to advocate unduly advantages technology-based delivery. We believe, for example, that for most subject matter, reviewing video- and audiotapes has no greater learning value than reading printed material and should therefore be treated similarly. But whatever the ultimate policy outcome, more consistency would certainly be welcome.

We're told that **California** has rejected the MCLE Commission's proposed increase of the 3-year CLE requirement to 30 hours from the present 25.

The **Virginia** Supreme Court has approved the State Bar's recommendation, reported last issue, to change the dates by which Virginia lawyers must complete and report their annual CLE participation. Beginning in 2002, the CLE compliance deadline for Virginia lawyers is October 31 and compliance reports are due December 15. To make the transition from the previous mid-year deadlines, an extended 15-month transition "year" will run from July 1, 2001 to October 31, 2002, in which 15 CLE hours (including 2 hours ethics) will be required instead of the usual 12.