

Learning After the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic had many effects, some permanent, on lawyers and the legal system. One thing that didn't change is the value of regarding continuing legal education as part of lawyers' business strategy instead of as a burden.

BY THERESA ELLIOTT

We all remember the shutdown orders of 2020, kicking off the chaos of the pandemic period. Many legal professionals worked from home and continue to do so even though the pandemic is largely behind us.

During those pandemic years, lawyers, courts, and other legal service providers needed to shift quickly, kicking off a technology revolution. Courts and lawyers used videoconferencing for many legal proceedings and continue to do so for a range of proceedings, creating efficiencies and cost savings.

In the online learning environment, the same is true. State Bar of Wisconsin PINNACLE® and other continuing legal education (CLE) providers shifted to fully online learning environments, and the Wisconsin Supreme Court issued temporary rule changes to allow attorneys to obtain all credits online.

What did the pandemic teach us? We changed for the better. Everyone learned that they can teach and learn in different ways, and valuable information can be transferred successfully in various formats.

We know the State Bar's role in improving the quality of legal services through CLE is not a one-size-fits-all approach. We also know that CLE can be an asset, rather than a mandated distraction.

The Learning Environment Post-Pandemic

During the pandemic, all of us had to learn new and different skills and models of delivering services and products. A new understanding of different learning styles and needs that warrant appreciation and consideration was the result, at least for the PINNACLE team.

Our members in Superior can't always get to Madison for CLE. But now we can get to them by delivering quality virtual experiences that are meaningful and valuable for their practices and their careers.

We have speakers who still want an audience, so we provide them with an audience by inviting members who still want face-to-face learning. Our ability to use technology to be flexible with speakers and learners has given everyone choices. Internally, our team is constantly striving to learn how to create more engaging online learning environments through polling, videos, data collection, special effects, and more. We have found a good balance that gives members a chance to learn on their terms.

CLE as an Asset

Members may often think of CLE as a regulated mandate. That is, they must obtain at least 30 credit hours of CLE every two-year reporting



Theresa Elliott is the director of professional development at the State Bar of Wisconsin. She previously worked with continuing education programs for architects, engineers, insurance agents, and lawyers. Throughout the year, she will share tips and techniques on how attorneys, paralegals, and judges can turn the chore of fulfilling CLE requirements into a business strategy. Access the digital article at www.wisbar.org/wl.
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period. While that is true, there's another way to look at it.

In my many years of experience in adult learning, I have found there are typically two types of adult learners. People in the first category view continuing education as a burden, a consequence, a distraction, and in some cases valueless. It's something they must do to maintain their license.

They typically take just the required number of credits. Relevance, worth, and quality of the credit is not a strong consideration when selecting programs. Often, their learning time is last minute, filled with distractions, and forgotten the moment they leave the session.

On the other side of the coin, in every professional field in which I have worked, there is another type of learner who has a different approach to learning. People in this category usually take more CE or CLE than necessary.

They tend to take subjects that are

not only specific to their trade but also take credits that are interesting, challenging, and hold a potential opportunity for the future. They value staying up to date with their learning because they see it as a business strategy that will:

- 1) Bring their clients the best, most accurate, timely information and service possible;
- 2) Immediately apply what they learned, and as a result, experience improved professional success and a return on their educational investment;
- 3) Build their reputation as subject matter experts among peers because they have the most current information. Their up-to-date learning earns them credibility when transferring information and translating current facts, processes, changes, and expectations; and
- 4) Give them a sense of pride and personal confidence that they are informed, engaged, and influencing the future of law, and not the past.

What we have discovered about attorneys who value learning is that many experience very positive, tangible, business outcomes. Those who choose to embrace learning as an asset will very likely have an enhanced relationship and level of trust with their clients, success within their firms, a high level of regard by their peers, and personal satisfaction with a job well done.

Conclusion

Lawyers who think of CLE as an asset can leverage that learning into something tangible. As we move into 2024, PINNACLE will continue to be a partner in helping members achieve learning success. **WL**



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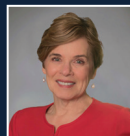
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