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CONTRIBUTORS

Benjamin Bay
Reena Glazer
Esther Lardent
Eve Runyon
Eva-Marie Malone,
Editor



Corporate Pro Bono at 75!

The impact of [Corporate Pro Bono \(CPBO\)](#), a partnership of the Association of Corporate Counsel and the Pro Bono Institute, has accelerated in recent months, with several new companies signing on to the Corporate Pro Bono ChallengeSM, developed by CPBO.

Please welcome the most recent Corporate Pro Bono ChallengeSM Signatory: **BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee**. By making this commitment to pro bono a matter of record by signing Corporate Pro Bono (CPBO)'s Corporate ChallengeSM, the legal department of this company, led by Bill Young, Senior Vice President of Risk Management and General Counsel, has brought the total number of Corporate Pro Bono ChallengeSM Signatories to 75!

[FULL STORY]

Pro Bono in Uncertain Times: Learning from the Past/Looking to the Future

[Editor's Note: The Pro Bono Institute and its Law Firm Pro Bono Project have, in recent months, received a number of inquiries about how firms can best preserve and protect their commitment to pro bono in an uncertain economy. Some firms that have downsized have inquired about how to lower their headcount without creating associate and partner anxiety that will dampen enthusiasm for pro bono work. Other firms have asked the Project to help locate projects and opportunities that will keep their lawyers – particularly those in transactional practices – busy until the economy improves. The Institute and its Project are available to provide confidential assistance on these and other issues encountered by law firms in this difficult time.]

Esther F. Lardent

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend an annual conference for managing partners/chairs of major law firms. It provided a unique opportunity to understand what is keeping top firm leaders up at night this year and offered fascinating insights into their vision of the current status and future of large law firms.

The Current Legal Economy

Not surprisingly, the formal panels and informal conversations at the conference focused on the overall economy and its impact on the legal economy. For many, if not most, large law firms, 2007 – or at least the first half of 2007 – was a blockbuster year financially. During the second half of that year and in 2008, as we have seen, firm profitability and productivity dropped – at some firms precipitously.

CONTACT US

Pro Bono Institute
1025 Connecticut Ave. NW
Suite 205
Washington, DC 20036

(202) 729-6699
(202) 296-0303 F

wire@probonoinst.org
www.probonoinst.org
www.cpbo.org

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Lessons Learned from 2001

While 2008 is not 2001, several missteps in the earlier economic downturn can and should be avoided by firms. While firms can and should seek to trim expenses in uncertain economic times, they should avoid cutting costs that are critical to the effective operations, productivity, long-range viability, and morale of the firm.

What Does It All Mean for Pro Bono?

As firms respond to the economic downturn, their actions and the language used by firm leaders can either strengthen pro bono – and use pro bono to strengthen the firm at a difficult time – or, often inadvertently, harm the firm's pro bono efforts.

[\[FULL STORY\]](#)

Refining Corporate Philanthropy and its Impact on Pro Bono

The [Committee Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy](#) (CECP) is an international forum of more than 165 business CEOs and Chairs, including many leaders from the world's largest companies, pursuing a mission to lead the business community in raising the level and quality of corporate philanthropy.

In the Spring 2008 edition of CECP's newsletter, *The Corporate Philanthropist*, several prominent authors – including Aaron Hurst, President and Founder, of the [Taproot Foundation](#), Barry Salzberg, CEO, of [Deloitte LLP](#), and Jean Case, CEO, [The Case Foundation](#) – persuasively describe the business benefits of encouraging highly-skilled employees to use those skills for the benefit of non-profits. Aaron Hurst describes five indicators of good client/pro bono service, ten best practices in pro bono services, and three building blocks to enable corporate success in meeting the demand for quality pro bono work. PBI's Esther Lardent makes a persuasive case for the business benefits of corporate pro bono (see p. 10).

[\[FULL STORY\]](#)

Corporate Spotlight: LexisNexis Corporate Social Responsibility

LexisNexis, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. and a Corporate Pro Bono ChallengeSM Signatory, has released a [Corporate Responsibility Report](#), highlighting the community service and legal pro bono work that Lexis employees participated in during 2007, and outlining objectives for 2008.

In the report, LexisNexis announces a commitment to 'encouraging and promoting pro bono service to low-income and disadvantaged individuals' by signing the Corporate Pro Bono ChallengeSM in 2007 and also noted that this was a key part of the progress of their CSR initiative as a whole. Growing out of this commitment, LexisNexis states clearly in the report

that they intend to meet the Challenge goal of 50% legal department participation in pro bono in 2008.

[\[FULL STORY\]](#)

July Is Pro Bono Month At The American Lawyer

The Pro Bono Institute is delighted to have worked with The American Lawyer again this year in its annual effort to showcase innovative and significant pro bono achievements. In the July A-List issue and throughout the month on [the American Lawyer website](#), Editor-in-Chief Aric Press and his team highlight outstanding pro bono work and other issues related to pro bono at major law firms. PBI regularly coordinates with media outlets as part of our commitment to spotlight successful pro bono initiatives. Read the full story for samples of the coverage.

[\[FULL STORY\]](#)

The Iraqi List Project: Helping Those Who Have Helped US

The danger to American soldiers in Iraq has received a great deal of media coverage, but the danger to Iraqis who have assisted American soldiers has gone largely unnoticed. For those who are forced to flee Iraq, the process leading to safety can be laborious. The cover story of the July 2008 *ABA Journal* details the struggle of one Iraqi refugee to get himself and his family to safety after he risked his life to serve as a translator to the paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne.

However, a growing number of attorneys are stepping forward to help Iraqi refugees navigate the asylum process. Law Firm Pro Bono ChallengeSM Signatory firms Mayer Brown LLP, Holland & Knight LLP, and Proskauer Rose LLP, among others, have attorneys offering to help with work that can be difficult – often requiring 'a gift for forging relationships of trust within bureaucracies,' as Chris Nugent of Holland & Knight says. Furthermore, this type of pro bono can demand dogged persistence and an acceptance of the fact that loss of contact with a client may mean the worst possible news.

[\[FULL STORY\]](#)

Pro Bono Institute Staff Changes

With mixed feelings, the Pro Bono Institute is saying farewell to two of our hardworking Project Assistants. The Corporate Pro Bono (CPBO) Project Assistant, Benjamin Bay, and the Law Firm Pro Bono Project Assistant, Jodi Sackel, began and ended their work for the Institute at much the same time. Although it is difficult to see them go, Ben and Jodi are joining the ranks of many of PBI's former assistants by pursuing law degrees; Jodi, at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, and Ben, at the University of Toronto

Faculty of Law. Their positions have been filled by Margo Roberts and Mary Baroch.

PBI has also benefited from the contributions of several summer interns, both law students and undergraduates: Rebecca Adams, a rising senior at Wake Forest University; Erik Hansen, a rising 2L at Boston University School of Law; Amanda Hollis, a rising 2L at American University Washington College of Law; Clint Morrison, a rising senior at Georgetown University; Robert Routh, a recent graduate of the University of Pennsylvania; and Andrew Samuel, a rising junior at the University of Michigan. The Pro Bono Institute is grateful for the hard work and dedication of all of our interns.

[\[FULL STORY\]](#)

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