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## FLYING SOLO

### Marketing

by Gina Bongiovi

Bongiovi Law Firm – Las Vegas

You're sitting at your desk, coffee still steaming, office equipment humming, hand poised to answer the phone, which remains deafeningly silent. How do you make the phone ring?

Let's start with **where you find clients**. Any number of people would love nothing more than to sell you thousands of dollars' worth of traditional advertising (billboards, print ads, TV, radio). Here's the catch: in order to mount a successful advertising campaign, you have to "touch" people at least seven times with some regularity. Unless rich Aunt Millie wants to pony up the dough to run a steady campaign for six months, you should consider other options.

First and foremost, you need a website. These days, I find myself looking askance even at individuals who lack an online presence; businesses without a website are simply not to be trusted. Your website should highlight your practice areas, your lawyers, and set your firm apart from the others in your space. The best way I've found to set yourself apart is to blog. Blogging accomplishes two very important goals: 1) you establish yourself as an expert in your field, and 2) the more you blog, the higher your site ranks in the search results.

Once you have a website, you actually have to leave the office. Join some organizations, volunteer for some boards – get out there and meet people. The trick here is not to market to your end client; market to your sales force. Figure out who else works with your target client and network with them. For example, if you're an estate planner, meet some financial advisors. If you do probate work, join a funeral directors' trade association. If you practice family law, get your hair cut and book a manicure – don't laugh, hairstylists and manicurists are often the first to know when a marriage is in trouble. Networking groups are a great place to start this

process, but it can take some time to see a return on your investment. I give every group about six months. If I haven't seen a return by then, I give up and move on.



Gina Bongiovi

Now your phone is ringing but you're finding yourself dreading certain calls. Once you have a somewhat steady stream of revenue, it's time to start **choosing the RIGHT clients**. This is one of the perks of having your own firm – you can choose your clients and avoid those train-wrecks who will make your life miserable. Here are some warning signs of a bad client:

- They have already fired two or more lawyers. Unfortunately, many lawyers are terrible with client service, so my spidey sense doesn't start tingling if they've fired one lawyer. If they've fired two or more, I give them the state bar referral service number and get off the phone ASAP.
- They are obsessed with your hourly rate and try unreasonably hard to get you to discount it. If your fee is their biggest concern, you can do backflips while juggling and pouring them their favorite martini and they will never be happy.
- It's clear that they expect you to solve all their woes in the initial consultation. We are mere mortals, but these clients will never be happy with less than miracles.
- They ask you to discount your fee on this project because they have "a lot more work for you down the road." Admittedly, I've fallen for this one more than once and the future work never comes.

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## YOUNG LAWYER SPOTLIGHT

### **Brandon Price**

*Thorndal Armstrong – Reno*

*Brandon Price is a Senior Associate at Thorndal, Armstrong, Delk, Balkenbush & Eisinger. Brandon attended Reed High School in Reno before earning his Bachelor of Arts, with distinction, from the University of Nevada, Reno. Brandon graduated cum laude from Texas Tech University School of Law in 2009. Brandon lives in Reno with his wife, Kendall, and their newborn daughter Reagan.*

#### **Q. What inspired you to become a lawyer?**

A. In high school I had the opportunity to participate in a government competition class called “We the People.” Throughout the class, we studied the U.S. Constitution, the Federalist Papers and various federal court decisions to prepare for state-wide and national competitions. The competitions were in the form of simulated congressional hearings, during which teams presented an opening statement concerning constitutional issues and defended their positions by answering questions that were posed by a panel of judges. Our class participated at the national finals competition in Washington, D.C. because we were the state champions. By participating in that class I became fascinated by the law and decided to become a lawyer.

#### **Q. If you weren't a lawyer, what would you be doing?**

A. I have thought about this question at length and I can honestly say that I have no idea what I would be doing if I wasn't a lawyer. I guess I would enjoy hosting a sports-talk radio show.

#### **Q. Besides your current job, what was your most memorable job?**

A. While I was in college I loaded trailers for a large parcel service that delivered packages in large brown trucks. That job provided me with extra motivation to graduate from college and obtain a law degree.

#### **Q. Do you have a nickname?**

A. Almost everyone in the Reno area who knows me from high school calls me “Cruz.” I will not explain how I received the nickname because the story is not very interesting.



*Brandon Price*

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## VIEWS FROM THE BENCH

**Judge Lidia S. Stiglich**  
**Second Judicial District Court, Department 8**  
*by Catherine A. Reichenberg*  
*Gunderson Law Firm – Reno*

Judge Stiglich knew she wanted to be a lawyer from a young age. Her mother was a secretary in the public defender's office, and Judge Stiglich's first job out of law school was doing civil trial work as a public defender in San Francisco. In college, she majored in Business Administration and Finance at UC Berkeley, but always knew she would attend law school. She went on to graduate from UC Hastings College of Law.

After leaving the public defender's office, Judge Stiglich opened her own civil law practice, Stiglich & Hinckley, LLP, with a colleague and broadened her trial practice. She eventually moved her portion of the practice to Northern Nevada, where she has family and had always enjoyed visiting.



*Judge Lidia Stiglich*

In 2012, Judge Steven Kosach retired and Judge Stiglich was appointed as his replacement by Governor Brian Sandoval. Judge Stiglich applied for the position to “step away from advocacy.” With her strong background as a trial lawyer of general jurisdiction and a willingness to learn, she works to be the kind of judge she wanted to practice in front of as an advocate. What she finds most enjoyable so far in her new position is the interesting variety of cases she hears and the intellectual challenge they present in addition to meeting the different lawyers who appear before her.

Outside of the courtroom, Judge Stiglich enjoys spending time with her family and taking part in the outdoor activities in the area. She feels that if she weren't a lawyer or judge she'd write fiction or teach, something she did during her time in San Francisco at Golden Gate University School of Law, New College of the Law, and the John F. Kennedy School of Law prior to moving to Reno.

Something Judge Stiglich learned in college as an Olympic softball hopeful and likes to see in others is the ability to win gracefully and lose gracefully. Asked what advice she has for new

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*“Something Judge Stiglich ... likes to see in others is the ability to win gracefully and lose gracefully.”*



State Bar of Nevada  
2013 Annual Meeting

## It's YOUR Bar Get Connected!

### The Trial Academy has never been more affordable!

For a limited time, attendees can **register** for the Trial Academy for \$399 - \$100 less than the 2012 rate! After this offer ends, the price increases to \$450.

July 25-27  
Lake Tahoe, NV

Harrah's & Harvey's

Connect with us at the 2013 Annual Meeting in gorgeous Lake Tahoe and experience what YOUR bar has to offer!

#### Don't Miss this: Trial Evidence with Prof. Mauet



Entertaining guest speaker Prof. Tom Mauet will highlight the first steps for evidence:

- What to do as soon as an evidence problem arises;
- The three R's approach to evidence;
- Making objections that persuade the judge; and
- Understanding the hearsay/non-hearsay dichotomy.

Mauet's expertise in the art of trial is legendary, yet his observations and instruction remain current and cutting edge.

He is the Milton O. Riepe professor of law and director of Trial Advocacy at the University of Arizona College of Law in Tucson.

#### Quick Links

[2013 Annual Meeting Home](#)

[Register Now](#)

[Event Schedule](#)

[Book Your Hotel Room](#)

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[Exhibitor Registration](#)

#### What's New at This Year's Trial Academy



Every year, the State Bar of Nevada's Trial Academy offers attorneys at all levels of experience the opportunity to hone their trial skills. Participants will have the chance to practice in front of experienced justices, judges and lawyers, and receive individual

feedback over the course of this three-day CLE event.

The academy kicks off on Thursday, July 25 at 9 a.m. The first day, sessions will cover themes and theories, opening statements/voir dire, and direct/cross examination. The following day, attendees will be treated to a special session on trial evidence with Prof. Mauet, followed by sessions on objections and closing arguments. Finally, on Saturday, July 27, students will finish the academy with a half-day featuring sessions on jury instructions and closing remarks.

#### Trial Academy Faculty Includes:

- Justice James Hardesty
- Justice Nancy Saitta
- Hon. Rob Bare
- Hon. Elissa Cadish
- Hon. Patrick Flanagan
- Hon. Elizabeth Gonzalez
- Hon. Abbi Silver
- Hon. David Wall
- Scott Coffee
- Rob Dotson
- Dominic Gentile
- Stan Hunterton
- Alzora Jackson
- Rene Valladares

For more information on the Trial Academy schedule, including specific breakout session dates and times, please download the [Annual Meeting Event Schedule](#) (subject to change).

## Flying Solo (Cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

Now you've gotten the swing of bringing in the business and weeding out the troublesome clients. **How do you keep the good ones?**

I'm almost embarrassed to put this in writing, but the first way to keep good clients is to...drumroll please...return their calls. I am amazed at the number of clients who are dissatisfied with their previous lawyers simply because they couldn't get the lawyer on the phone. It doesn't get simpler than this, folks. If you are too busy to return calls, congratulations. Now hire someone to do it. Remember that old adage from business class that says it costs four times as much to get a new client than it does to keep an existing one? If you keep your clients happy, they will come back for more and send you referrals.

Building your practice depends on building relationships, not papering the city with your business cards. Find quality professionals to trade referrals with, treat your clients as you'd like your family to be treated, and don't be afraid to decline a representation that will drive you batty. •

*Gina Bongiovi is a Las Vegas native and holds a J.D./M.B.A. from UNLV. She is a solo practitioner providing outside general counsel services to small businesses and serves on the advisory board of Vegas Young Professionals and LexisNexis Firm Manager and as pro bono counsel for Vegas Shepherd Rescue. Her blog [MyOwnFirm.com](http://MyOwnFirm.com) provides advice for starting a professional practice.*

*“Treat your clients as you’d like your family to be treated, and don’t be afraid to decline a representation that will drive you batty.”*

## Young Lawyer Profile - Brandon Price (Cont.)

(Continued from page 2)

### Q. What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

A. I enjoy spending time with family and friends, attending sporting events, playing in recreational sports leagues, snow skiing and traveling.

### Q. What do you consider your greatest personal and professional accomplishments?

A. My greatest personal accomplishment is graduating from law school with honors because there are no college graduates in my family. My greatest professional accomplishment is successfully representing clients before the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

### Q. What are 3 things your peers probably don't know about you?

A. 1. My high school counselor advised my parents that I was not “college material.”  
2. I am not a fan of live concerts.  
3. My favorite movie is the Wizard of Oz.

### Q. What is the best advice you've ever received?

A. As a child my parents frequently told me I would achieve success through hard work, dedication and treating people with respect. I try to follow that advice every day.

### Q. What do you listen to in your car on your way to/from work?

A. I frequently switch things up, but my go-to stations are NPR and ESPN Sports Radio.

### Q. What was your favorite low-cost meal as a poor law student?

A. Taco Tuesdays at Rosa's Café and Tortilla Factory in Lubbock, Texas.

### Q. Describe your perfect day off.

A. Spending time with my family at a professional baseball game. •

## ❖ Practice Tip ❖

*When you get a new client, particularly a business owner, perform an unclaimed property search for them at <https://nevadatreasurer.gov/UPSearch/>. The search takes only a few seconds and, if you find a match, you may end up with a very happy client.*

State Bar of Nevada Young  
Lawyers Section

Learn more about YLS and find archived newsletters online at: <http://www.nvbar.org/content/young-lawyers-section>

**2012- 2013 YLS OFFICERS**

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## Views from the Bench - Judge Stiglich (Cont.)

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lawyers, Judge Stiglich is inspiring: Maintain your enthusiasm for the law. Be diligent and proud of the work you do. Shine. Always bring your "A" game and litigate in an elevated, dignified way. Remember it's not about the lawyers, it's about the case. Love your work and focus on the great privilege and responsibility you have in this profession. Be a chef, not just a cook, and know that your work means something. •

## RECENT YLS EVENTS

Several Northern Nevada YLS Members, as well as a handful of their more seasoned colleagues, came out on April 19, 2013 for the annual "Servicing Seniors" event with Nevada Legal Services. This event, in its second year, brings volunteer attorneys to senior centers throughout the state to consult with seniors free of charge about the legal issues they face, such as incapacity planning, probate, and other more general legal issues and questions.

The event, preceded by a free CLE event in March that covered estate planning, incapacity planning and probate, featured 12 attorney volunteers for two-hour sessions in six senior centers in Nevada communities including Reno, Elko, Austin and Winnemucca, among others. In all, nearly 40 seniors turned out, which was an improvement from the inaugural event in 2012. Many thanks to all attorney volunteers, as well as Renee Kelly and the entire staff at Nevada Legal Services for helping to make this new event a continuing success!



**YLS Members Jordan Davis and Mike Lee at the ABA Spring Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota**

## INTERESTED IN CONTRIBUTING CONTENT?

YLS always needs volunteer writers to contribute to our newsletter to keep it fresh and interesting. Contact Austin Sweet at [asweet@gundersonlaw.com](mailto:asweet@gundersonlaw.com) today to discuss how your content can be included.

Take pictures at your next YLS event and submit them for inclusion in the next newsletter!