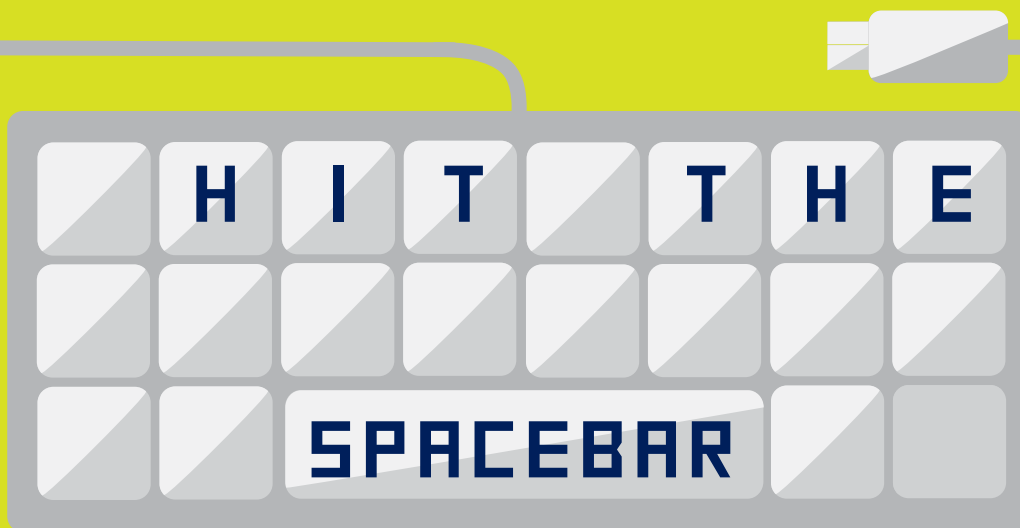


*STRESSED?
NEED RECHARGING?*



Kathleen Guthrie Woods

// **W**elcome to your new Spacebar!" With supersized scissors, The Bar Association of San Francisco's (BASF) Executive Director Yolanda Jackson cut the ceremonial ribbon and invited staff and members to check out the new member-only lounge. It was an impressive turnout for a Wednesday night in June, and the attendees' enthusiasm was contagious. "It's totally a celebration!" said Carolyn Lee, a member of the Solo and Small Firm Section and a senior attorney at Abkin Law. "It's another example of how valuable membership is." And it's another example of how BASF is following through on promises made for the 2015 membership theme, "Built for You: One Organization, Countless Possibilities."

No one is quite sure who first came up with the idea. "That's a great question!" Jackson said, when she was asked, and there's speculation that another bar association's member lounge inspired BASF's team. Several people mentioned they were called in for input after the idea was suggested. "BASF has done this spontaneously after seeing the need," said Lee.

Once the decision was made, the work was accomplished quickly and efficiently, with many contributions from sponsors and staff. "Some of our managers did the heavy lifting," said Jackson in a shout-out during her brief pre-ribbon-cutting presentation. Although the work didn't include actual construction, staff members oversaw the budgeting, designing, purchasing, and remodeling of the space in addition to their normal work responsibilities.

The result is a welcoming, functional space—think of a hotel’s business suite or a satellite office—where members can catch up on email before meetings or CLE classes, or can gather for a few minutes of networking after an event. “It’s a landing spot,” said Matt Gluck, a solo practitioner and chair of the Solo and Small Firm Section. “It’s a nice place to do your work or relax,” said BASF Director of Membership Leonard Lun. “It’s a sanctuary.”

Situated kitty-corner from the reception desk in BASF’s third-floor lobby, the space was previously a typical glass-walled meeting room. The lounge now features two large tables with four chairs each, two comfy overstuffed chairs with swivel arm tablets, and a partitioned desk that provides two additional semiprivate workspaces. A computer, wireless printer, and magnetic whiteboard are available for use, and several electrical outlets are positioned on the tables and throughout the room. Free Wi-Fi is available, as well as a charging station with quick-charge technology for several devices at once. Clif Bar snacks, courtesy of Bruce Lymburn, general counsel of Clif Bar & Company, as well as coffee, tea, and water, are provided at no cost. “It’s similar to an airport lounge,” says Lun.

As are the Legos. Stephen Zollman, a long-time member who recently went from being on staff at Swords to Plowshares to being a solo practitioner, pointed out the colorful set. In a playful nod to the “Built for You” theme, 600 pieces were spilled onto the floor, another hint that this is where you can “get out of the hustle and bustle of downtown, and meet other attorneys in a relaxing space,” said Lun.

Spacebar is intended to provide “countless possibilities.” It’s a convenient spot to pop in on the way to an event, class, or meeting. It’s also an alternative to killing time in a coffeehouse, lingering in BASF’s reception area, or wandering the hallways. Certainly it’s preferable to having to stand on a street corner while checking your phone for email.

Barristers Club President-Elect Blair Walsh offered a good example of the need for a member lounge. She had attended a meeting in BASF’s offices earlier in the day, then had to dash back to her office at Abramson Smith Waldsmith before returning for the evening’s ribbon-cutting event. That in-between dashing time could have been spent at Spacebar. “It would have been so nice to have this small window to be productive,” she said.

Beyond that, it can also serve as an office away from the home office, a benefit for attorneys coming from the peninsula or East Bay who have to travel into the city frequently for business. Philip Leider opened his office



Frank Leidman breaks out the Legos in the member lounge.



Members can use the desktop computer and wireless printer to print documents.



Comfortable tablet arm chairs invite members to relax before a meeting or CLE at BASF.



BASF/JDC Executive Director Yolanda Jackson cuts the ribbon to the new member lounge as members and staff look on.

in Berkeley two years ago, but returns to San Francisco frequently to meet with clients, attend depositions, and take CLE classes. He sees that Spacebar will be a “great place to run into people, to hang out and recharge.” A fifteen-year member of BASF, he used to “hit up” a friend at a firm for space to work between appointments or hold meetings at a coffeehouse. “Now this is my place to meet with colleagues,” he said, “or just to recharge my iPhone.”

The lounge is open and available to all members, and is “particularly valuable for solo practitioners and members of small firms,” said Lee. Small firms are defined as those with fewer than ten attorneys on staff, and the Solo and Small Firm Section, which was launched this year,

is very active; solo practitioners and small firms account for 22 percent of membership. “We have seen an increase of people opening their own firms as a result of the recession,” said BASF Director of Communications Ann Murphy, who cited cutbacks at firms and the number of law school graduates as affecting this shift.

Being solo or small brings its own set of unique challenges, and attendees at the ribbon cutting shared their experiences of getting support and encouragement from their colleagues at BASF. Many solo practitioners work from home or rent space outside of San Francisco because of the rising costs but still must attend meetings here. “It’s a particularly difficult time for lawyers to maintain downtown space,” said Gluck. “Many have been priced

out; some never priced in.” Amanda Gordon, of Gordon Family Law and cochair of BASF’s Family Law Section, had just signed a lease on office space, having worked from a virtual office for the first six months as a solo practitioner. In identifying these attorneys’ need for a space downtown, said Lee, BASF “recognized the untethered nature of the times.”

As for Spacebar, “We were consulted every step of the way,” said Gluck, on behalf of the Solo and Small Firm Section members who were invited to be part of the planning and serve as “a sounding board from the perspective of the user.” Members looked at floor plans and gave feedback. The amenities came from the results of a survey asking what they’d like to see in a member lounge.

“I’m psyched!” said Gluck. “There are so many younger and new lawyers. This will be a key benefit.” And now his goal, he said, is to “spread the word so it’s utilized!”

Alicia Gámez, member of BASF’s Board of Directors, echoed this sentiment in her remarks at the ribbon-cutting ceremony and encouraged attorneys from practices of all sizes to take full advantage of the lounge. “This charger charges phones of solo/small firms and phones of larger firms,” she said, to the appreciative laughter of attendees.

“Come and use the space. Use the workspace, the charging station,” said Lee. “Have some coffee. Talk to

others.” Added Jackson, “Consider this your office away from home.”

Spacebar is open Monday through Friday (except holidays), from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. No appointment or reservation is needed. Drop in!

Kathleen Guthrie Woods is a San Francisco-based freelance writer. As a long-time solo practitioner writer, she appreciates the concept of BASF’s member lounge.



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