



SOLO & SMALL FIRM SECTION

THERE'S NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME TO GET INVOLVED

Matt Gluck

Have you heard? A lot is going on with The Bar Association of San Francisco's (BASF) Solo and Small Firm Section. We've got great new leadership, with a strong executive committee to be led in 2017 by Cochairs Charles Jung, Nassiri & Jung, and Rose-Ellen Fairgrieve, Fairgrieve Law Office; and Secretary Mark Punzalan, Punzalan Law. We've put together an amazing set of offerings and we're looking to do more—with your help.

I'm writing this article as part victory lap, part plug. Here's a bit of the recent history of the Solo and Small Firm Section and some detail on what's going on now and in 2017. And, because I want to help you grow your network and your practice, meet a slew of dynamic lawyers in diverse practice areas, and have a lot of fun, there's an explanation as to why you should get involved—not just with the section, but with its executive committee.

HOW WE GOT HERE

In 2012, the Solo and Small Firm Section leadership consisted of only Section Chair Dan Dean, a great guy and well-respected personal injury lawyer. He was arranging CLEs of interest to the solo and small firm community, significantly focused on practice management topics. The section was relatively quiet for years up to the point when Dan Dean took over leadership.

Also in 2012, I launched my solo practice. With extra time on my hands and needing to network, I decided to get involved with the Solo and Small Firm Section. I had had a good experience with the Barristers Club, having served a two-year term on the Barristers Club Board of Directors beginning in 2010, including serving as president in 2011, and got to know a lot of good people through that experience. I reached out to Dan Dean and asked if he could use a vice chair; he was happy to have someone pitch in. Almost immediately, however, he called me with news: he

had been elected the northern California representative to the State Bar of California Board of Trustees and in light of his new responsibilities he would be stepping down as the chair of the Solo and Small Firm Section. In an odd turn of events, I went from being a brand new member of the section to being the chair and the entirety of the section leadership within a couple of months.

They say it's lonely at the top, but it didn't have to be. I knew from my time on the Barristers Club board just how much a robust leadership group could accomplish. The board included something like fourteen directors, organized to lead the Barristers Club's numerous sections and committees, which put on significant annual events including the Judges Reception. Just as important, service on the Barristers Club board was a great deal of fun and a great way to make connections.

I decided to try to create a similarly robust leadership structure for the Solo and Small Firm Section. Like the Barristers Club's large and diverse membership of newer lawyers, there are literally thousands of solo and small firm lawyers within the membership ranks of BASF. Our cohort includes, by definition, a host of leaders and self-starters, so I was pretty sure that there would be people willing to get involved. I reached out to Carolyn Lee (at the time a tax attorney with Abkin Law and currently with Morgan, Lewis & Bockius), a friend from the Barristers Club board, and she eagerly agreed to get involved. (If you know Carolyn Lee, you know that she is an amazing person with great ideas, great enthusiasm, and an unbelievable work ethic, so I knew she would be game.) John O'Grady, O'Grady Law Group, also agreed to get involved, bringing his valuable perspective as a long-time solo and a fun-loving person. Working with the staff of BASF's CLE Department, we put together a written charter for the Solo and Small Firm Section executive committee and, at the first official meeting, we were joined by a dynamic group of around a dozen self-starters. We were off to the races.

With Carolyn Lee's boundless energy and leadership, the enthusiasm of the new executive committee members, and broad support of BASF staff including Executive Director Yolanda Jackson and Director of Continuing Legal Education Raquel Cabading, the executive committee now provides the section with a broad array of programs and services. By so doing, we have created a community that is stronger than ever and well supported by BASF and recognized within the Bay Area legal community.

WHAT WE'RE DOING NOW

The Solo and Small Firm Section provides numerous ways for solo and small firm practitioners to get involved, no matter whether you are just starting your practice or whether you are well seasoned, including:

- CLEs in numerous areas of the law, including emerging areas such as cannabis law and cybersecurity
- Happy hours and other social and networking events
- Solo/Small Firm Toolkit created by and for solo and small firm attorneys (toolkit.sfbbar.org)
- Articles and communications in print and online
- Monthly brown bag lunch meetings with topics of importance to small business owners
- Solo and Small Firm Annual Conference on February 9, 2017
- Solo and Small Firm listserv where most questions you face as an attorney can get answered by a colleague

WHY YOU SHOULD GET INVOLVED

If you are a solo or small firm lawyer, odds are you should be involved with the Solo and Small Firm Section—and not just with the section, but with the section leadership. Here's why.

Except for a few of us, solos and small firm attorneys have to work to bring in business. For solos and partners in small firms, it's mandatory. For most associates and other nonpartner attorneys at small firms, bringing in business is part of getting paid, making partner, supporting the firm,

and making it profitable. Even if bringing in business is not part of the job description, raising the firm's profile and ensuring that work continues to flow into the firm is part of job security.

In my experience, the Solo and Small Firm Section is an excellent, robust source of client referrals. Section members are constantly looking to provide their clients with good service by connecting them with other lawyers when their clients' needs fall outside their particular areas of expertise. And, unlike most of the other BASF sections, we've got members practicing in just about every area of law.

How will you get those referrals from your Solo and Small Firm Section mates? Networking at a section event or brown bag lunch is a pretty good way to connect with people, but it only goes so far. You can tell someone who you are and what you do (practice that elevator speech), but it can be hard to make a real impression. Your colleagues will be familiar with what you do as a leader of the Solo and Small Firm Section and how you work, and will be able to recommend you on the basis of their knowledge of your strengths.

For some of you (us), service to your community of solo and small firm lawyers also has intrinsic value. I grew up a Boy Scout, and I am a proud member of the Order of the Arrow, once known as "Wimachtendienk Wingolauchsik Witahemui" or "The Brotherhood of Cheerful Service." Service to one's community is a key part of what it is to be a complete person—and a lawyer.

Perhaps most important, service on the Solo and Small Firm Section executive committee is fun. It's a great group of people. Come check us out.

Matt Gluck is a founder and partner at Gluck Daniel and an experienced trial lawyer in the areas of contract disputes, real estate litigation, homeowner association disputes, as well as partnership and corporate disputes. He served as the cochair of the Solo and Small Firm Section of The Bar Association of San Francisco and on the Barristers Club Board of Directors, serving one year as its president. He can be reached at mgluck@gluckdaniel.com.