



2008 CORPORATE PRO BONO ROUNDTABLE AND NETWORKING DINNER HIGHLIGHTS

As in years past, the Corporate Pro Bono Roundtable and Networking Dinner was one of the most valuable sessions at the 2008 Forum for In-house Corporate Pro Bono. The session offered an informal and friendly environment for in-house counsel to exchange information and ideas about the most innovative and effective practices in in-house pro bono.

The Roundtable began at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 28, with the participants introducing themselves to each other and sharing their experiences and perspectives on in-house pro bono, the successes of their programs, and the challenges that their departments face. After the introductions, participants discussed three core issues for legal departments building a pro bono program chosen by the participants themselves: generating and maintaining momentum and interest, geographic challenges, and partnerships with law firms and legal service providers. Participants shared lessons learned and discussed common questions, including ways of tying any pro bono efforts into a company's larger CSR/community service program, using your pro bono program to build unity in a legal department that is spread over many office locations, and how to create partnerships with firms that already have a strong pro bono program and are reluctant to work with corporations.

After this initial discussion period, the group split into two breakout groups. The first was for law departments just starting their pro bono programs. Led by two peers from other legal departments sharing lessons learned from their own companies' successful programs, this group discussed best practices for how to launch a program, identified problem areas and potential solutions to logistical issues such as multijurisdictional practice concerns, adopting a pro bono policy, and how to include and recognize members of the legal department team to promote and expand a fledgling program. The second group, for legal departments with established programs, spoke in depth on how to keep momentum during a period of turnover in pro bono committee/point person positions, partnership issues including how to develop the best working relationships with firms and legal service providers, and how best to define pro bono for the objectives of a program for the legal department, and the company as a whole.

After the breakout sessions the two groups came back together to briefly conclude the Roundtable before the start of a networking dinner and cocktail reception, which allowed for further discussion of the issues, as well as the opportunity for those legal departments in the same regions to talk about potential pro bono opportunities.

The Corporate Pro Bono Roundtable and Networking Dinner is an attendee-driven, broad-based, free flowing brainstorming session where corporate counsel can discuss their experiences and address their challenges in a lively and informal environment. The Roundtable and Networking Dinner is the only national and global meeting focused exclusively on pro bono in the in-house context.

Corporate Pro Bono will host the next Roundtable and Networking Dinner on March 5, 2009, in Washington, DC, at the Pro Bono Institute's Annual Seminar and Forum on In-House Pro Bono. Contact Eve Runyon, director of CPBO, for more details at erunyon@probonoinst.org or 202.662.9699.

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