

2017 JOINT SPRING MEETING

**GROUP LEGAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION
SOLO, SMALL FIRM, AND GENERAL PRACTICE DIVISION
STANDING COMMITTEE ON GROUP & PREPAID LEGAL SERVICES
MAY 18-20, 2017
SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA**

CROSS-MARKETING YOUR PUBLICATIONS AND YOUR PRACTICE

**THURSDAY, MAY 18, 2017
11:45 - 12:45**

PRESENTER: MELANIE BRAGG



Melanie Bragg
Legal Insight, Inc.
Houston, TX

Melanie's legal career began as a Briefing Attorney for the 14th Court of Appeals in Houston, Texas where she researched and helped draft published legal opinions. She tagged along with the judges to political events and functions and by the time her year was up, she hung out her shingle and made the courthouse her home. In those early years she did criminal court appointments while learning the ropes in the other Houston courts. The judges appointed her to determine the best interest of children, the elderly, and the mentally incapacitated.

Born on July 16 in Dallas, Texas to a salesman and homemaker, Melanie Bragg was a natural writer. Her mother instilled in her a love for book and movies and her father instilled a belief that she could do anything she wanted to do in life. At seven she wrote "The Story of My Life" on her mother's manual typewriter, in red ink of course. It was only half a page, but it was a start. You never saw her without a book and her diary.

She graduated from high school a year early, went to junior college, then took a semester off to go to Europe. Melanie landed in Paris, France and began a jewelry business that at first thrived, then fizzled due to France's famed silver laws and other legal entanglements. She was back in the States and set her sights on international studies at the University of Texas at Austin, where she graduated with honors. She went to law school in Houston and became involved in bar association activities on the local, state, and national levels. She became the first woman president of the Houston Young Lawyers Association and was a director of the ABA Young Lawyers Division. In addition to the leadership, public service, and career development these activities brought, there was a lot of long-term relationship building, traveling, and dancing involved in her young lawyer years. This tradition carries on to this day with her activities in the ABA YLD Fellows board and the Annual Fellows dinner dance-her young lawyer friends are now fellows and they are still the first ones out one the dance floor each year!

In 1993, Melanie formed a company called Legal Insight, Inc. and wrote and performed in ten legal education programs for the University of Texas Health Science Center, all of which were

broadcast on their closed-circuit television network. Two of the programs caught the eye of national distributors and they have been distributing Melanie's legal education programs to hospitals, universities, and healthcare organizations nationwide since. Her titles are ***Charting Medical Record's: Do's & Don'ts to Avoid Liability; HIPAA Legal Liability Issues; HIPAA: Privacy & Security In Depth; Informed Consent Legal Liability Issues; Emergency Care Legal Liability Issues; and What You Should Know About Living Wills***. Educating the public and professionals about best practices is a favorite part of Melanie's law career.

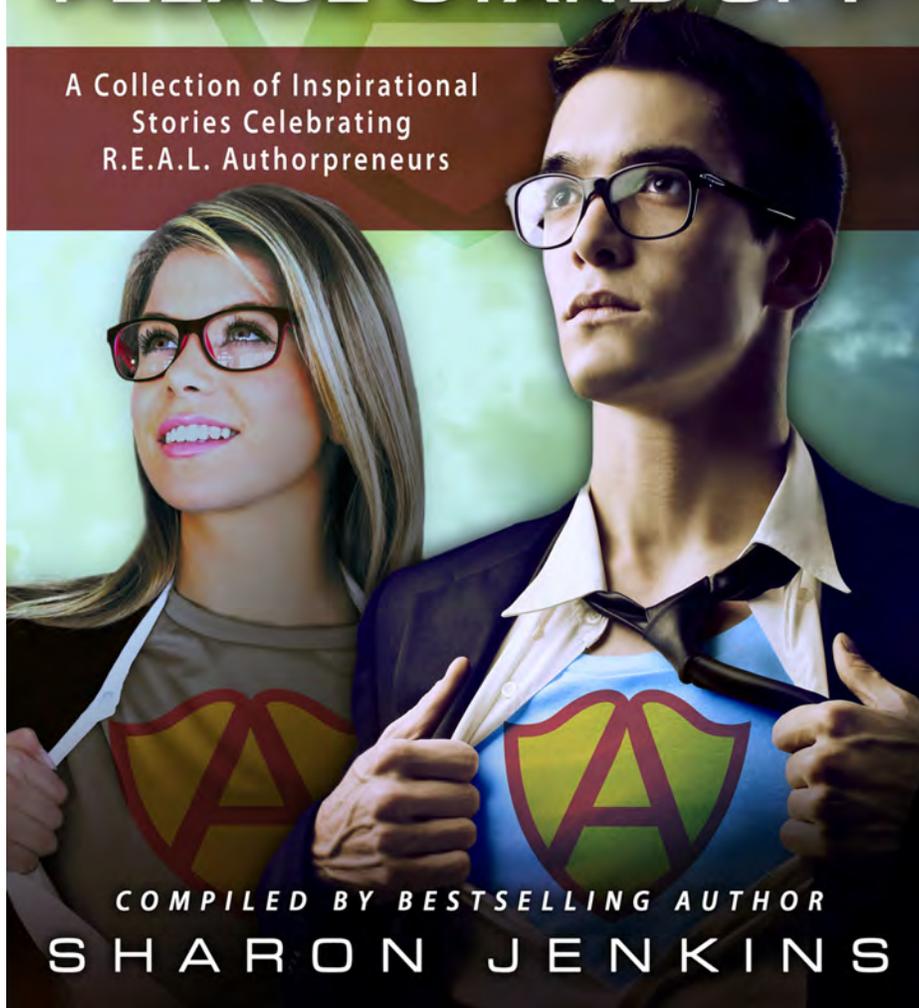
The idea for ***Crosstown Park*** came one day when she was driving back to Houston from a seminar in New Orleans. She kept seeing an African-American man hitchhiking in a business suit and tie. The urge to pick him up was strong enough to make her begin asking questions- what if he was a widowed, retired teacher who was on his way to Houston to help some homeless children? What if they teamed up to help those children? She got home, went straight to her pen and paper and began the story that is now ***Crosstown Park***.

They say when the student is ready, the teacher appears. Melanie met the late, great Rita Gallagher, the co-founder of Romance Writers of America, who became her writing teacher, her mentor, and her good friend. Melanie continued to develop her craft and became involved in the American Bar Association Solo, Small Firm & General Practice Division Book Publications Board. Her first published chapter was included in ***How to Capture and Keep Clients*** titled ***Effortless Marketing: Putting Your Unique Qualities to Work***, published in 2005. It is the basis for many of her motivational talks to a variety of groups. Her first ABA book was published in 2009, ***HIPAA for the General Practitioner***.

When she's not writing, Melanie devotes her time to her work with the ABA Solo, Small Firm & General Practice Division, mentoring young lawyers, and other charitable causes. On Friday afternoons, you can see her at the local movie theatre catching a new movie. If you look real hard you will see a big smile on her face.

WILL THE R.E.A.L. AUTHORPRENEUR PLEASE STAND UP?

A Collection of Inspirational
Stories Celebrating
R.E.A.L. Authorpreneurs



COMPILED BY BESTSELLING AUTHOR
SHARON JENKINS



Melanie Bragg is the author of *Crosstown Park*, a social legal thriller with a spiritual twist. She has long enjoyed a reputation as one of Houston’s fiercest attorneys in her representation of children, the elderly, and mentally disadvantaged people. Her firm, Bragg Law PC, is a general civil firm in Houston, Texas. She also writes and produces legal education programs through Legal Insight, Inc. Her writing credits include *HIPAA for the General Practitioner*, published by the American Bar Association, as well as the upcoming book *Defining Moments: Insights into the Lawyers Soul*, to be published by the American Bar Association Flagship Division. She was the Author 101 University Success Story featured speaker in 2012 and is a frequent speaker and teacher to groups of lawyers, writers, and business professionals.

When she’s not writing, Melanie devotes her time to her work as Chair of the Book Publications Board of the Solo, Small Firm & General Practice Division, and sharing ideas with fellow authors.

She is a Professional Member of the National Speakers Association and serves on the NSA-Houston Board of Directors as Secretary. On Friday afternoons you can see her at the local movie theater catching a new movie. If you look real hard, you will see a big smile on her face.

She can be reached at Melanie@melaniebragg.com or her website, MelanieBragg.com.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

MAXIMIZE YOUR AUTHOR EXPERIENCE

Melanie Bragg

The road to becoming an author can start early—like it did for me in second grade when I typed the *Story of my Life* in red ink on my mother’s typewriter—or it can start much later. But one thing is for certain—being an author in today’s times is much more than typing away at your desk and then sending the manuscript by snail-mail to a publisher with an in-house editor who will correct all of your typos, then print and market it for you. For an author to sit back and receive big fat royalty checks is a thing of the past; I am not sure it ever existed.

The bottom line is: *Being an author is a lot of work.* You have to really love it and do everything you need to do in order to be successful. And, in fact, the writing part of being an author is just the beginning.

The word “authorpreneur” encompasses the skills required to be an author in today’s world. Writers come in

all shapes and sizes. They find time to write on the bus, the train, before work, in between shifts—whatever it takes to get the job done. It is the *love* of writing that keeps them going.

In recent years the publishing world has undergone a radical transformation. The industry is still in transition. Agents and traditional publishers are changing the way they do things. Anyone with the tenacity to actually sit down and write their manuscript, *and* with ample funds in their pocketbook, can get published. The big publishing houses are keeping up with the times by opening their own self-publishing branches.

Authors, too, have different motivations for getting published. Some just want to tell their stories or get their message across: Vanity Press. Or they want to tell someone else's story: True Crime/Biography. Others want to be the female John Grisham: Melanie Bragg. Some think they have written or will write the "great American novel." The truth is that most everyone has a book in them, and if you are a writer, you have probably been approached by folks with a "great idea" for a book they want *you* to write for them. I tell them to learn the *craft* of writing and dig in. Most writers I know already have their stories in mind and are busy working to accomplish their own goals.

There is a wealth of information on the market today about the *craft* of writing. In his book *On Writing*, Steven King gives a great overview of the process. I was lucky to have the late, great Rita Gallagher, cofounder of RWA (Romance

Writers of America) teach me the craft of fiction writing and novel structure. The education was priceless. I remember fondly the four years of spending all day every Friday soaking up her wisdom. She will always be my writing angel, and the picture of her inward and outward beauty is in my mind's eye when I write. I can hear her say, "Every word is a dollar to an editor" to teach me that less is best.

Here is the good news: Sugar coating the hard work involved doesn't help anyone. But there is no doubt that accomplishing your life-long dream of publishing a book and being satisfied with the quality of the book is, what I call, the "elixir of accomplishing your true purpose in life."

For me, someone who was born to write, all of the effort is worth it, and I would not trade it for anything in the world. I want to share my lessons learned so that you will be better prepared to have success in your writing career.

So here we go for the "best practices" I want you to know *now*.

WRITERS MUST LEARN TO LISTEN TO OTHERS ...

... but to always follow their own gut.

People are well-meaning most of the time, but sometimes they just plain don't know what they are talking about. It is kind of like asking your spouse to edit your book—boy, is that ever a setup; of course they are going to love it! An impartial, disinterested person should always be your editor.

But what I mean here is that you should always know that your judgment as an author is best. It is good to get

information from books, teachers, and critique groups, but in the final analysis, if you feel strongly about something in your manuscript, you should go with it.

I learned this from my critique group. Everything I debated with my teacher to keep in would be the very thing every month that the class loved. It taught me to take the teacher's advice or the students' feedback, but to keep the things I felt very strongly about because they would resonate with audiences.

An example of this was the beginning of my first novel, *Crosstown Park*. Everything you read about starting a novel says that you have to start with a big impact, a big crisis, so my first draft started with a courtroom scene. It never resonated with me, and I felt very strongly that the story starts when Alex meets the reverend on a plane. It was the most important part of the story, even though it was not a big climax or catastrophe, because it was the beginning of a major shift in the main character's life. Sometimes those events can be subtle and seem small, but in retrospect they are life-changing. In the final version, I went with my gut to stay with the plane scene and was so pleased when so many readers commented that they loved how the story began. Two points for me following my own best judgment. Do the same in your work, and you will be happy and turn out a better final product.

WRITERS MUST DEVELOP A ...

... marketing plan with their vision, a framework, and a build-out plan.

I teach a class on this, but let me say that you have to start with your *vision*.

- How do you see yourself and the book once it is done?
- What are your goals for the book?
- Do you want to keep writing after this project?
- Do you know the reality of how much it costs?
- How much time it takes?
- How long it takes to get the pay off?
What is the pay off?
- Have you really researched the business?
- Are you realistic about your vision and your goals?

Taking a deep breath and giving it some deep thought here will go a long way.

Many people think writing is easy until they try. They think that making an A on a paper in high school English makes them a writer. I actually thought that. Rita used to look up at me when I was impatient during class and say, "How long did it take you to be a lawyer?" I would say, "Four years of college and three years of law school." She would say, "Did you really think you could be a writer with no effort?" I would always shrug my shoulders and give her a sheepish grin and say, "Yes." After a while I got the message that the "sweat equity" in writing is the same as anything else in life. You have to be your own Rocky Balboa and "Just do it!"

The *framework* is what you do to learn the craft, what writing groups you join, what events you attend, and what you learn about the business of writing. Planning in advance, knowing who your market is, and making sure you have nonfiction hooks in your fiction so you have lots of things to talk to audiences about is crucial in this phase.

The *build-out* is the fun part after publication. If you have done the vision and the framework well, then you will have fun. During the build-out you are speaking and doing events all the time and really getting the word out on your book. You cannot wait and plan everything after the book comes out. It is an organic process, and as much as you plan, other things happen. It is truly a delightful experience and one you want to enjoy. I did twenty-one events in ninety days after my novel came out, and I learned an incredible amount about being an author in a very short period of time. I had to muster all of the strength and confidence I had and then enjoyed the ride.

After all, I spent many years creatively visualizing the day when I would be the author in a Barnes & Noble store. I can honestly say the reality is every bit as good as the dream, and when I am doing a book event, I feel as authentic as I can be. I am the person I was born to be.

With *Crosstown Park*, I spent the time establishing relationships with the store CRMs—the community relations managers—so that when the sequel, *All One Blood*, comes out, I will be welcomed back with open arms.

One word about bookstores: I focused on selling my books, but more than that, I focused on giving the customers in the store a good experience with me, the author. That is what the stores like. They want to be seen in the community as supporting authors and providing interesting authors to their customers.

Remember, it is a marathon, not a jog.

One CRM told me a story about how Deepak Chopra stayed at a book signing until 1:00 a.m., until the last person was taken care of. When the CRM thanked him, Deepak said, "It is my honor. I still remember the days when I came in and sat at a table and no one even stopped to talk to me."

I loved that the CRM shared that story with me because it made me feel like he understood that all authors start somewhere. If Deepak Chopra went through what I am going through, then it is all right. You just have to keep going—get up on the horse and stay in the saddle.

WRITERS MUST BECOME INTERESTED IN ...

... and support other writers. Become an activist—get involved in books! Join your local writing groups, get in a critique group, read magazines, sign up for blogs, look outside your genre. It is important to learn the craft and to know what is going on out there. Build your platform and your following. Make sure the people you meet are added to your list. Ask them, "May I put you on a list to receive notices of my book signings?" Write a blog. Send out newsletters.

And promote other authors. When people see you promoting other authors, you become the go-to guy or girl in the business. People want to hear from you because you are in the know. This is your world—be a leader.

Some authors just live in a vacuum and only think of their book. But the really successful ones I know are active. They support other authors online and in social marketing groups. It is kind of a “scratch my back” and “I’ll scratch yours” world, so the more you spread the word about others who may be ahead of you, the more people you will have behind you in terms of spreading the word about your endeavors. If you are an island, it will be very lonely when the book comes out and does not sell.

Surround yourself with people who want what you want and help them get where they are going; you will get farther. You don’t have to get it back directly from those you give to, though, and if you think you will, you will be disappointed. Think of it as sowing lots of seeds so that there will be a harvest for you when the time comes.

WRITERS MUST DEVELOP ...

... multimedia skills and social marketing skills. You must have a strong online presence with Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Goodreads, Amazon, Instagram, Pinterest, and any other site relevant to your market.

If you are saying to yourself that you don’t like Facebook—*stop it!* Facebook is an invaluable tool. And I promise, I do not spend that much time on Facebook. I have managed

to integrate it into my life as a pleasurable activity that does not take long. It is paying out big dividends.

Social marketing does not always work instantly, and you do not always get instant feedback on it, but plug ahead anyway. And like I said above, keep giving. You “like” people’s stuff, you comment on their threads, and they will come to you and their friends will come to you. Take courses that make it easier for you, and learn simple things all the time.

One example I can give you is one day when I walked into court and several people asked me about *Crosstown Park*; they had all seen it on Facebook. The word had spread with little effort on my part other than to post photos of my book events. I had reached what felt like a celebrity status and didn’t even know it.

People are watching whether they comment or not. They respect you for following through on your dream.

The value of social marketing is not always apparent, but don’t let that stop you! Develop a practice of spending a little time in the morning and a little time in the evening on it and it will multiply.

One word of caution: Don’t over-post. Let your public miss you and wonder what exciting things you have been doing while you have been offline. You can create a lot of buzz that way. The mystery of you...

WRITERS MUST BE ...

... their own publicist (or hire one at several thousand dollars a pop).

If you have a big budget, you can hire a publicist, but make sure and research them thoroughly. Make sure you know what they are going to do for you, talk to some of their other clients, and be fully aware going in what your duties are and what their duties are. I have not heard a lot of great publicist stories, and since I am such a natural self-promoter, I have not met the right person for the right price to promote me ... yet.

You are the best person to promote you. Mind your blog, promote your book, and do everything you can to have the most visibility.

WRITERS MUST BECOME ...

... public speakers.

To be a successful author, it is imperative that you can speak in front of a group and give a good talk. After *Crosstown Park* came out, doing twenty-one events in ninety days taught me real fast that you need to have a plan, and you need to follow that plan and then leave room for what happens in the group dynamic.

The place to start getting time in front of an audience is one of your many local Toastmasters groups. When you get a little more polished, I would suggest the National Speakers Association chapter in your locale. I qualified to become a Professional Speaker with the organization and got on the Board of my local chapter, NSA Houston, which put me in touch with the monthly speakers. I get invited to the speaker dinners and lunches, so my skills as a speaker are growing

due to my involvement ... plus I get to fellowship with like-minded folks. There are lots of coaches, and each meeting is a workshop on a different aspect of public speaking, teaching us skills all authors need to know about, like storytelling. These skills will come in handy at your author events. Plus it helps you build your "list."

There are many different forms of author events. There are pre-launch parties, launch parties, book signings, book events, book panels, book fairs, book festivals, book conferences, and book clubs to name a few. What you talk about is different for each one, and you have to use a different set of skills. For some of them, you talk to a group, some of them you talk to individuals, but no matter where, you have to learn how to talk about your book in the best way. You have to enroll people into wanting to read the book.

It can be a challenge to talk about yourself and your book all the time, even for the outgoing types like myself. But at the events you have to be able to talk to and respond to a variety of people, all the while fielding questions about the book.

The most frequently asked question is, "How long did it take to write?" You want to create a compelling story around this inevitable question. There are many paths to choose here, and I confess I did mine by trial and error until I came up with what feels comfortable to me. Don't think you have to come up with something new each time. Think about how little kids like to hear the same story over and over. Audiences are the same. Hone your stories and tell them time and time again.

The audience will think of things you never thought of when you wrote the book. And you have to be prepared to respond to mistakes. For instance, an old high school friend of mine showed up at a book signing, and I was so excited. Then he told me, “You called the thing in the middle of the road a medium instead of a median.” He thought it was a typographical error; in fact, it was intentional, and my editor did not catch it. (Note to self: editors are humans too.) I always thought the middle of the road was a medium! What an enlightened moment I had when I learned otherwise for the first time. Instead of being upset about the mistake, though, I enjoyed it and the crowd appreciated that I did not defend it or try to explain it away. Audiences love us when we are human. The more vulnerable you are, the more fun you will have.

The audience also wants to know how you came up with the idea for the story and a little bit about the background of the story. I have tried out many different aspects of the process with a variety of groups and it depends upon your audience. That is where practice comes in handy, especially when you can rehearse in front of a supportive and impartial group before you get to the real audiences.

Next time I will be more prepared because I learned much of this when *Crosstown Park* was released a month early—and yes, I went into a panic mode when it was released a month early, though I was happy to be as prepared as I was. My goal is for you to be prepared. I want you to be the best you can be.

Effortless Marketing: Putting Your Unique Qualities to Work

Vol. 4, No. 2

Melanie Bragg

Melanie Bragg has long enjoyed a reputation as one of Houston's fiercest attorneys in her representation of children, the elderly, and mentally disadvantaged people. Her firm, Bragg Law PC, is a general civil firm in Houston, Texas. She also writes and produces legal education programs through Legal Insight, Inc. (founded by Bragg in 1993). Her writing credits include HIPAA for the General Practitioner as well as the upcoming book Defining Moments: Insights into the Lawyer's Soul to be published by the American Bar Association (ABA) flagship division. When she is not writing, Melanie devotes her time to her work as chair of the Book Publications Board of the ABA Solo, Small Firm General Practice Division and sharing ideas with fellow authors. She can be reached at Melanie@bragglawpc.com.

Defining Moments: Insights Into the Lawyer's Soul

In 2005 GPSolo published a very successful book called [How to Capture and Keep Clients](#). My chapter was called "Effortless Marketing: Putting Your Unique Qualities to Work." The second edition is in the works, and I am excited to update the chapter that was my first published work and the beginning of my writing career.

What I did not know then was that years later the chapter would be the basis for my keynote and the foundation for much of my teaching in the area of marketing for lawyers, authors, and anyone in business. It goes to show that sometimes the little things in life turn out to be more important than we know and that doing everything with excellence in the beginning always pays off in the long run.

In the past nine years, the practice of law has changed dramatically, especially in the area of technology. Since January I have completely overhauled my firm infrastructure, and I am operating my law practice in a much more efficient and integrated way. Letting go of the old ways does not come naturally, but I find I am excited about and loving the changes as they occur. Although there is always some resistance to change, the benefits of having my files scanned and accessible from any device and location make for a much more fluid ability to work anywhere and anytime. *My productivity and peace of mind have increased tenfold.*

In my update to the "Effortless Marketing: Putting Your Unique Qualities to Work," chapter I will flesh out more fully the **ADD** formula—A: Assess Yourself; D: Decide What Works For You; and D: Do it! In the "Assess Yourself" portion I talk about the importance of making and

reviewing your written goals. In the context of a law practice we will discuss purpose, values, and mission statements. In the “Decide What Works for You” section we will discuss the benefit of having coaches, teachers, mentors, and increasing your skills in the areas in which you have weaknesses; and in the “Do It” portion we will talk about handling rejection, making action plans, and building in structures of accountability.

Another chapter I am going to do for this new edition of *How to Capture and Keep Clients* is about nurturing clients. Since I purchased this amazing new software last year, Infusionsoft, I have been learning about “lifecycle marketing” and automating systems in my law practice to be more efficient. Infusionsoft is a robust customer marketing solution that was developed by a fellow lawyer, Clay Mask, and his team of innovative professionals. I am in the process of beginning to use it as a way to keep in contact with old clients and to provide them content and resources they need as a way to stay in touch.

I realize I have 30 years of clients and good results on cases, and I have never reached out to them to see how they are and let them know what I am up to now! What a concept!

We are not taught marketing or business skills in law school, and so often our representation is fraught with stress and complexities that once the relationship is over, clients just want to go away and not come back. I am going to see if I can turn that reality around and create a more consistent home base for my clients in meeting and serving their legal needs.

Be on the lookout for this exciting new book published by the GPSolo Division. I think the new one is going to be very helpful to all lawyers no matter which stage of their practice they are in, and I am excited to bring you two new chapters and to open the discussion between us as to which systems are working and which ones are not. I am very excited about this massive technology shift in my office that I accomplished on my own with the amazing help of the Apple Store Joint Venture program and Rolando Cruz and Larry Whatley. I am excited about being a Mac Lawyer now, and guess what? I have Windows on my iMac, so I have not lost the functionality of Windows in the process.

The practice of law is changing, and I believe the GPSolo Division has the opportunity to pioneer the changes and to stay on the cutting edge of technology and client services. I hope you will join me in that excitement and let me know how you are doing in these areas. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have too. *To your success!*