

OCTOBER 2023



Rania's Business Roundtable

Networking the Wrong Way Can Get You Into Legal Trouble

Networking is a valuable skill that can help you: (1) advance your career, (2) learn new things, and (3) make meaningful connections. However, integrity and emotional intelligence are required for those networking to advance their own goals while respecting the needs and preferences of others. How do you network effectively? How do you maintain networking etiquette and ethics? How do you avoid legal trouble? Keep reading.

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Rania Sedhom

Universal Studios, Concord, and ABKCO take on Anthropic Alex Aufrichtig

As A.I. grows in popularity and companies begin to integrate it into their processes, the legal world has more questions than answers: How does A.I. fit into intellectual property law?

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Matthew Scott's Book Club: The Truth About Employee Engagement

According to a recent Gallop report, 32% of U.S. employees feel engaged at work. That's a nine-year low. The report also found that 18% of employees are actively disengaged, which means they "are disgruntled and disloyal because most of their workplace needs are unmet."

Such a low employee engagement rate hurts your company's profitability, productivity, and customer service.

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Join your fellow entrepreneurs for a conversation about the issues facing small businesses today, with refreshments and legal advice provided by attorneys Rania Sedhom and Matthew Scott.

Roundtable Live!

In October, we discussed ESG Investments and fiduciary liability. Our conversation covered ESG investments in 401(k) plans and whether or not they should be included, as well as what liability fiduciaries may face when approving or disallowing ESG investments.



Space is limited for our next Roundtable on November 30th!
Email info@bespokelawfirm.com today to reserve your seat!

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Your Employees are Miserable. Help Them Find Meaning in Their Work

Matthew Scott

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In his book, **The Truth About Employee Engagement**, Patrick Lencioni argues that employees are miserable because they feel anonymous or irrelevant or because they can't measure their workplace contributions. Lencioni believes that addressing these concerns will boost your business's morale and bottom line.

Anonymity. Lencioni writes that "[p]eople want to be managed as people, not as mere workers." Managers should take a genuine interest in their reports. If you learn about an employee's interests, family, and hobbies, it's unlikely that they'll feel like just another cog in the proverbial wheel.

Irrelevance. People want to know that they're needed. Employees that don't know what value they add to the business will find no reason to do more than the bare minimum. Managers should help their reports understand who they help (the customer? The manager?), and how. An employee's impact might not be measurable in dollars; managers should consider the impact of the employee's attitude or work ethic on the rest of the team.

Immeasurement. According to Lencioni "[e]mployees who can measure their own progress or contribution are going to develop a greater sense of personal responsibility and engagement than those who cannot. Managers should work with their reports to identify ways they can measure their own day-to-day performance. For example, if the employee is a waiter, he or she can track not only tips received, but also customer satisfaction. For other jobs, an employee might track time to complete a project.

HOW DOES A.I. FIT INTO INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW? Universal Studios, Concord, and ABKCO take on Anthropic

Alex Aufrichtig

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Universal Music Group, Concord Music Group, and ABKCO filed a \$75 million lawsuit against Anthropic, a generative A.I. company. Universal and its co-plaintiffs have alleged that Anthropic's A.I. chatbot, Claude, engages in "systematic and widespread infringement" by copying and distributing lyrics from at least 500 songs by renowned artists.

One issue is that Anthropic's actions may undermine the existing market for licensing copyrighted works. If third parties are required to obtain licensing to disseminate copyrighted works, why shouldn't A.I. companies do that same? The argument is that Anthropic's failure to license these copyrighted works prevents authors and publishers from controlling their copyrighted work and reaping the benefits of their creation.

On the other hand, A.I. companies are likely to argue that the use of their A.I. systems is fair use, that is, the permissible unlicensed use of copyrighted works for commentary, criticism and reporting. An article from Axios presents one argument: A.I. systems are "simply scaling up the human knowledge process where people read up on existing information and use it to generate new ideas."

In the past, computer-generated programs did not present intellectual property infringement questions because they were merely used as a tool by a human author. Today, A.I. presents a tougher legal challenge because in some ways, A.I. is creating the content.

Networking the Wrong Way Can Get You Into Legal Trouble

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Rania Sedhom



Your Expectations

Why are you attending the event in question and who do you want to meet? You likely chose the event for a reason and being able to share that reason will help you have a successful event. Be prepared to share your needs and offer something in return. For example, you can open with something like "I'm attending this event because I read So and So's book and found it of great value. It has supported my growth and helped my coaching business. I'm here to say thank you to the author, and to offer 30-minute consultations to those I meet today, in an effort to give back." If that is not of interest, you can simply say something like "I just started my company and want to meet people who are interested in (insert topic)." While others react to what you are saying, you can offer them something relevant. Be sure to ask about what they want and see whether you can help. Even if you are not able to provide something tangible like a consultation, you have something to offer and you should be prepared to specify what you can do to help someone else. You may be able to make an introduction, subscribe and comment about their newsletter, invite them to an event you plan to attend, etc.

Be Professional

Although typically seen as a social setting, networking is not the place for you to loosen your tongue or drink too much alcohol. You are setting a first impression or continuing an impression if you're seeing some of the same people again. Ensure that you do not make comments that you may regret. Leave gossip, comments about appearance, etc. at home. There is a fine line between opinion and defamation. Either way, a networking event is an event with a purpose – to connect people for mutual benefit and growth. There is no room for negativity or controversy.

Be Genuine and Ethical

Networking is not a time for exaggerated sales techniques. Do not misrepresent yourself, your abilities, or your intentions. When describing your skills or mission, be clear and articulate but not fantastical. I once met a real estate broker at a networking event, and she told me that her differentiator is that she guarantees she can get you 5% higher offers than other brokers. First, I am at a loss about how she can guarantee anything. Second, 5% of no offer is still zero. I was so turned off by her comment, that when I arrived at my office the following day, I highlighted her name to ensure that I do not refer her to anyone. Whatever it is that you want and are offering, be honest about it.

Avoid Legal Issues

Depending on your behavior and characterization of others, you may find yourself in legal hot water. Are you a touchy feel person? A hugger? Your innate friendliness may lead to someone else's discomfort. Depending on how that person reacts to you, you may find that you are shunned at subsequent events. If your over friendliness goes too far, the organization hosting the event may be sued. If the hosting company is sued, you will certainly be entangled in the proceedings as well. Mischaracterizing others based upon appearance or opinions, may lead to defamation lawsuits or, at the very least, being asked not to attend events.

Stick to matters of importance, like mutually beneficial relationships, seeking help or mentoring, etc. Misrepresenting your business and capabilities may seem like an innocent exaggeration but is an element of fraud. Even if not legally forbidden, it is an act that will ruin your reputation and ultimately result in business failure.