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ABC Update

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How ABC Certification Has Helped Me as a Consumer Attorney

I have been certified in consumer bankruptcy law by the American Board of Certification (ABC) in New Jersey for more than 20 years. The biggest advantage is that I have an obligation to keep up with continuing legal education and act professionally with all colleagues due to the standards imposed for certification.

Before continuing legal education (CLE) became mandatory in New Jersey in 2010, I had consistently attended numerous bankruptcy seminars and had been a member of the Bankruptcy Inn of Courts to try to keep up with all of the constant changes in bankruptcy law. All of the CLE helps inform me of cutting-edge trends in consumer bankruptcy law and hot topics in bankruptcy in general.

In addition, constant interaction with colleagues helps all of us brainstorm on issues that affect all practitioners. Thus, regardless of adhering to your state's CLE requirement, the 20 hours of yearly bankruptcy education helps me with all of the hot topics and trends in bankruptcy law.

One of the biggest problems confronting the legal profession in general is the breakdown in civility within the bar. I am very fortunate to practice in a state where we have a bar members that are truly civil while zealously representing their clients. Since most cases should be able to be settled because they deal with monetary issues, practitioners should try to resolve most issues or go into mediation to avoid huge legal fees for their clients. Except in rare objections or certain adversary proceedings, there should be room to settle in most cases while protecting your client's interests. If you litigate every matter, you will burn out. You do not want to litigate a claim where there is minimal benefit to your client.

The most important thing that I have learned is that as a board-certified attorney, your character is

extremely important. Thus, you always have to be respectful to the bench as well as to your adversaries. We are in a business in which we are repeatedly working with the same people, so you have to always represent your clients zealously — but you must always be courteous, since you do not want to burn bridges. If you are unreasonable and do not consent to adjournments, it will come back to haunt you.

Board certification by the ABC helps you stay abreast of all the current trends and hot topics and reinforces a civility toward your colleagues, since you are held to a higher standard in bankruptcy practice. **abi**

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