

AMERICAN BANKRUPTCY INSTITUTE JOURNAL

The Essential Resource for Today's Busy Insolvency Professional

ABC Update

BY KIRK B. BURKLEY

Certification for the Next Generation

In today's legal market, it is important to stand out from the crowd. Everywhere you turn, young lawyers are looking for skills to make them more marketable to clients and employers. It seems that there are more and more specializations within specializations. Think about it. Even though you might be a bankruptcy attorney, are you a business or consumer bankruptcy attorney? If you are business bankruptcy attorney, do you represent debtors, banks or unsecured creditors' committees?

I'm sure you can see where this is going! Becoming board certified by the American Board of Certification (ABC) may be just the thing that motivated young lawyers are looking for. ABC has certified nearly 1,000 lawyers nationwide in business bankruptcy law, consumer bankruptcy law and creditors' rights law. Every young lawyer should strive to be one of the elite board-certified attorneys in his/her given sub-specialty. Even going through the process of becoming board certified is an excellent way to separate oneself from the rest of the field.

The process involves rigorous testing and continuing legal education requirements, recommendations from fellow practitioners and at least a five-year focus on a particular area of certification. For young lawyers, going through the process helps you to mature into a confident and competent bankruptcy lawyer. Along the way, you will be required to learn about the Bankruptcy Code and process, as well as interact with other practitioners. There is simply no better way to develop into the kind of lawyer that firms want to employ and clients want to hire.

All three board certification programs are accredited by the American Bar Association and many individual states. Congress recognized the importance of board certification by listing it as one of the factors in determining the amount of reasonable compensation to be awarded to chapter 11 professions under § 330(a)(3) of the Bankruptcy

Code. Especially when it comes to young lawyers, being able to claim board certification is a good way to let the bankruptcy court, clients and opposing counsel know that they are dealing with a well-trained individual.

However, the benefits do not end at certification. Once you become board-certified, you will join a fraternity of other competent and like-minded individuals who value continuing education, professionalism and dedication to personal improvement in the bankruptcy field. Once certified, there are many ways to get involved and network with other lawyers. ABC has lots of interesting committees, including a new task force exploring best practices to use social media in marketing and continuing education. Please consider this article a call to arms for all young lawyers to get involved and become board certified! **abi**

Reprinted with permission from the ABI Journal, Vol. XXXIII, No. 12, January 2014.

The American Bankruptcy Institute is a multi-disciplinary, nonpartisan organization devoted to bankruptcy issues. ABI has more than 12,000 members, representing all facets of the insolvency field. For more information, visit abi.org.



Kirk B. Burkley
Bernstein-Burkley PC
Pittsburgh

Kirk Burkley is a partner with Bernstein-Burkley PC in Pittsburgh. A member of ABC's Board of Directors, he also serves as chair of its Social Media Task Force.