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ABC Update

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Why Board Certification Matters



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I know I'm getting old because my "new" doctor just retired. In searching for what I hope will be my last family doctor, I have two primary criteria: (1) recommendations from other professionals I trust, and (2) board certification. I need to find someone from a field of unknowns, and I first narrow the field to those professionals who have demonstrated the skills and dedication necessary to achieve certification. It is no coincidence that the professionals recommended by those I trust, whether based on personal knowledge or reputation, are often the same professionals who have achieved certification.

I have been a board-certified commercial bankruptcy specialist since 1993 and feel a great sense of accomplishment. I received praise and congratulations from my colleagues, and other attorneys who were certified offered their support. I hope and believe that I inspired others to complete the certification process.

I receive many referrals that are based—in whole or in part—on my certification. I, in turn, routinely turn first to the American Board of Certification (ABC) search engine or printed directory when looking for qualified attorneys in other jurisdictions. Being an ABC member enhances one's reputation among other professionals, clients, and often judges.

In addition to providing assurance of experience and demonstrated competence, certification can also enhance fees. Section 330(a)(3)(E) of the Bankruptcy Code instructs that in determining rea-

sonable compensation for a professional, the court should take into account all relevant factors, including "with respect to a professional person, whether the person is board certified." In Missouri, the chapter 13 "no-look fee" is higher for certified attorneys, and I hope this catches on. After all, certified attorneys have a minimum of five years of experience in their area of certification, have demonstrated participation in multiple and varied matters within that arena of practice, have been recommended by their peers, have passed an examination testing their competence and have maintained steady levels of continuing education in their field of specialty.

If you are a board-certified attorney, congratulations! If not, consider applying for certification. Visit www.abeworld.org/search to find an attorney who has gone the extra distance to demonstrate his or her experience, education and competence. It's likely that the search results will include professionals you already know as being among the top in our field. **abi**

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