

Loitering Encouraged

By Jill Snitcher McQuain

By now, most of you have had a chance to visit the Columbus Bar since the completion of our recent renovations. The feedback has been positive, and we're thrilled with the lighter, more modern look – not to mention the added functionality.

As anyone who has been through a remodel knows, the process was not easy and certainly was not without its headaches. But in the end, the result is a better, more useful space for our members.

Truth be told, five years ago, I'm not sure we would have made the decision to stay at 175 on the Park. The surrounding area was somewhat blighted by an abandoned mall, lack of dining options, and some less-than-attractive "store fronts" on High Street. The building itself had become a bit dated. What a difference a few years can make.

The Columbus Bar now overlooks an urban park at the epicenter of some impressive urban living. From your neighborhood bar, you can see (and walk to) the Franklin County, Ohio Supreme, and Federal courthouses. We are conveniently situated among numerous inexpensive parking options, accessible to all major arteries and an entertainment destination. And, what's not to like about all the new dining – not the least of which is a plethora of food trucks during the summer that the Solo/Small Firm Committee has worked into its meeting dates. Simply put...this place is happenin'!

Lease negotiations were complex, focusing largely on renovations to make our space more modern. We started with two goals in mind: (1) reducing overhead and (2) increasing our potential for additional revenue.

Reducing overhead meant trying to shrink our footprint by bringing Columbus Bar inc onto the 11th floor. The added benefit of this move allowed our incubator participants additional exposure to Columbus Bar events and networking opportunities. It also allowed us to reduce the program's overhead by over \$30,000/year.

Increasing revenue meant making the space more versatile for today's remote lawyer. With an increasing number of attorneys going solo, we wanted to be able to provide our members with space that could be used for depositions, mediations, arbitrations, training, and even a neutral site for client meetings should it be necessary for the lawyer otherwise working out of his/her home office.

After months of research and negotiations, we settled on a design plan and lease structure that let us make improvements that achieved our goals: save money and position ourselves to generate revenue by "subletting" our space to members and businesses in need of affordable meeting space. All told, the new lease offered a generous tenant improvement allowance and a savings of approximately \$70,000/year on rent.

I'm pretty sure we had the best negotiating team on the planet, and I would be remiss if I didn't give them credit. (Although, I could never totally repay them.) The team was led by Steve Buchenroth (who, I might add, has helped us with every lease for longer than any of us can remember). Steve was joined by committee members Keith Schneider, Jameel Turner, and David Bloomfield Jr. through an 18-month process that started with evaluating our current needs, hiring a broker, shopping the area and securing an architect/design firm. After reviewing various sites and options,



with the assistance of our brokers, Paul Tingley and Collin Wheeler of Jones Lang LaSalle, we concluded that our current location made the most sense if we could negotiate the right terms.

It took four months of renovations in place, meaning we all kept working while walls were demolished, through intermittent power outages and loud noises that made the concerts in the park sound like crickets. We made the best of it. (Check out our Facebook page for photos and historical anecdotes we uncovered along the way.) We made fast friends with the electrician, foreman, wood workers, painters, and plaster guys. At one point, I mistakenly thought it might be fun to try on the stilts our painters were wearing....let's just say that was a bad idea.

And, in case renovations to our physical space weren't enough disruption, we thought it would also be a good idea to redesign our website, our magazine and implement new technology systems at the same time. We've had a total makeover. Tell us what you think. It's all been done with you in mind.

If you haven't already, please check us out, online and in person. If you ever find yourself needing some extra space, I hope you'll give us a try. Our prices are among the most affordable and convenient downtown. And, I can say with confidence that our staff is *the* most friendly, helpful, customer-service orientated staff around.

So, come on over. Loitering is encouraged. We mean what we say when we call ourselves your Neighborhood Bar – where everybody knows your name.



jill@cbarlaw.org

By Jill Snitcher McQuain,
Executive Director,
Columbus Bar

