

So... Why Do You Attend The IBA Conference?

With the IBA conference being held in Dubai, there's no better time to get up to speed with the latest legal professional developments in the Middle East and beyond.

What we also know is that the IBA conference offers many other opportunities including of course, the opportunity to form new relationships and re-kindle old ones.

So what does the IBA mean to you? Why do you attend the conference year in, year out? We asked some of our good friends from around the world including Akira Kawamura the President of the IBA.

What do you believe are the main benefits for lawyers attending the IBA Conference and why do you continue to return to the conference each year?

Akira Kawamura, President of the IBA

I think lawyers attending the IBA's Annual Conference are provided with the excellent opportunity of professional development on a number of levels. International lawyers of all jurisdictions and specialisms attending the event develop their professional networks, and utilise business opportunities; hear the latest thinking of the legal profession; advance their knowledge base and skills sets; debate with their peers; and form life-long relationships. Some delegates have been attending the IBA Annual Conference for more than a quarter of a century. Also, Bob Stein, an IBA elder, once said as an officer that lawyers should use the skills of our profession to serve the public for the betterment of society. I believe in this ethos and as President of the IBA, I have asked my colleagues to devote their efforts to this objective. I am very sure that we are succeeding in this through the work of the IBA and that those attending the Annual Conference are happy to be associated with, and involved in, the work of our organisation. I believe that delegates return year after year because they recognise the IBA Annual Conference as the preeminent event in the legal calendar for legal professionals across the globe. The IBA has been the global voice of the legal profession for 64 years and the expertise of this non-political, professional organisation is recognised and valued.

Patrick Ang, Partner at Rajah Tann (Singapore)

I see 3 main benefits for attending the IBA conference. Firstly, the IBA conference provides a platform for building relationships. The IBA as a community of lawyers provides a convenient and well organised forum not just for senior partners but also future generations of lawyers to build relationships and keep in touch with each other. Secondly, it is an avenue for knowledge acquisition. The IBA puts together some of the most prominent leaders in the profession. With the interaction of different cultures, shared knowledge of best practices and thought leadership in the law, all participants can expect to involve themselves in the setting of new norms and standards. This is especially helpful as it encourages personal improvement as much as it does for service delivery levels for the profession as a whole. The topics selected for each IBA conference reflect the most relevant and pressing issues faced by the profession. Thirdly, the IBA builds a legacy for future generation of lawyers. The IBA espouses the principles of integrity and ethics of the profession at every conference and serves as a timely reminder of the importance of the role we play in society. What better way is there for the IBA traditions to continue to be passed down to future generations of lawyers?

Doug Jones, Partner at Clayton Utz (Sydney)

The IBA provides a great opportunity to share professional knowledge and experience with practitioners from a wide range of jurisdictions. The members of the IBA, in each of the specialist practice areas, are

experts in their field who are willing to share experiences across legal cultures.

David Rivkin, Debevoise & Plimpton LLP (New York & London)

The IBA offers the best programming of any bar organization anywhere in the world. The substantive programs presented at the annual conference are a superb way to hear from the best lawyers in a lawyer's field of practice and to learn the most innovative techniques and up-to-date information. Because more than 50 committees present programs, the annual conference also offers the chance to learn about many different substantive areas. And in addition to these excellent learning opportunities, the conference offers the chance to meet the best lawyers from around the world: more than 4000 lawyers from more than 100 different jurisdictions. The lawyers whom I have met at the IBA have become professional colleagues with whom I have worked on cases and also good friends.

George Savvides, Managing Partner at George L. Savvides & Co LLC (Nicosia)

The annual IBA conference is a unique opportunity for international lawyers to broaden their professional knowledge through attending high class specialized sessions. At the same time it provides an excellent opportunity for networking with lawyers with similar interests from all over the world, something which I have found over the years to be a very helpful marketing tool.

What would be your top three tips for first time delegates attending the IBA to ensure their experience is valuable both from a professional and personal development perspective?

Akira Kawamura, President of the IBA

My first tip would be to strongly encourage first-time delegates of the IBA annual conference to attend the opening ceremony and the welcome party. These are both extremely attractive and splendid events. This year the distinguished Nobel Peace Prize laureate and international lawyer, Dr Mohamed ElBaradei, will provide the opening address - and should not be missed! While the Welcome Party provides a wonderfully relaxed environment for delegates to mingle, eat, and drink. A stunning firework display ends the evening's activities. These events are planned with the utmost care over a long period of time to ensure that all delegates feel a sense of belonging to a truly international organisation. Great care is taken to reflect the culture of the venue of the Conference. This is much appreciated by delegates who attend in significantly large numbers.

Secondly, I would advise first-time delegates to bring a high number of business cards to exchange with other delegates throughout the week. In addition to the plethora of working sessions there is also a wide selection of social gatherings, some arranged by the IBA, others by law firms, or trade delegations. Business cards are essential. In addition, first-time delegates should bring copies of their firm's brochure which would be a good promotional tool for introducing and impressing individuals they meet. My third tip would be to recommend first-time delegates to attend as many sessions of their interests as possible. With more than 200 working sessions covering a vast array of topics including competition law, construction law, arbitration, oil and gas law, and banking law to name a few, I think the IBA annual conference provides an unparalleled experience.

Furthermore, I would encourage new delegates to talk with the committee officers responsible for coordinating the sessions. IBA Officers are always approachable and welcoming. By engaging with the officers and getting involved in the work of an IBA committee, you position yourself as a possible future panellist, or perhaps even a committee officer - this is hard work but thoroughly enriching, professionally and personally. I would also add enjoy yourself; work hard and play hard!

Patrick Ang, Partner at Rajah Tann (Singapore)

Firstly, remember that there is much you can learn from experience and secondly, that the profession is as personable as we lawyers make it to be. Lastly, take time to appreciate the offerings at IBA which extend

beyond your traditional practice areas.

Doug Jones, Partner at Clayton Utz (Sydney)

Make sure that you attend the working sessions of a limited number of committees. This will give you a thorough working knowledge of the areas of specialty and the contributions that these committees can provide. Take full advantage of the social networking opportunities that the functions associated with the IBA provide and make yourself known to the officers of the committee or Committees in which you are most interested in your area of specialty and seek to become involved in the work of those Committees.

David Rivkin, Debevoise & Plimpton LLP (New York & London)

First, scan the program to find the sessions that are of the greatest relevance to your practice, and plan which ones you will attend during the week. Also be sure to attend one or more of the showcase programs that present issues of great importance. Second, introduce yourself to officers of any committee in which you have an interest and learn from them how you can assist the committee and become active. Third, attend the regional lunch and other interest group gatherings that would be most valuable to you.

George Savvides, Managing Partner at George L. Savvides & Co LLC (Nicosia)

Firstly, attend as many relevant sessions within your fields of specialization or interest and make the most of social functions: both those organized by the various committees as well as those organized by other firms. Make sure you go through the list of participants and try to contact those with whom you feel that there is an opportunity or potential of networking and bring many business cards as you can with you!

The IBA is a great networking opportunity. How do you make the most of the networking opportunities available?

Akira Kawamura, President of the IBA

Yes, the IBA annual conference provides supreme international networking opportunities. Typically, delegates use the working sessions, coffee breaks, lunches and social events to converse with like-minded attendees and exchange contact details. Once again, the importance of having a sufficient supply of business cards cannot be over emphasised; when the world's eminent specialist lawyers are gathered, you do not want to be caught short. In this time of increased cross-border transactions it is essential to have a strong international network of professional contacts. With delegates from more than 120 jurisdictions including international lawyers both private and in-house, government officials, business executives, bankers, and economists set to attend the IBA Annual Conference conversations held allow delegates to establish business relationships with trustworthy professionals in foreign jurisdictions.

Patrick Ang, Partner at Rajah Tann (Singapore)

Cocktails and dinners are always a great way to unwind and meet new people. It is also helpful to venture out of our practice areas to meet lawyers who do different areas of work and gain fresh insights from them. Think of it less as "net-working" and more as "net-enjoyment"!

Doug Jones, Partner at Clayton Utz (Sydney)

The networking opportunities of the IBA conference are both social and professional. In order to take maximum advantage of the professional networking, research the committees closest to your area of specialty and get to know the officers of those committees thus enabling you to choose your best networking opportunities from a professional point of view. From a social perspective both the committees, committee functions and the law firm functions associated with the IBA are ideal opportunities to meet professionals from all over the world. Take maximum advantage of these social activities.

David Rivkin, Debevoise & Plimpton LLP (New York & London)

By attending many of the sessions of the committees that fit your practice, you can meet many other lawyers with similar practices and interests. They often need referrals in your home country. Similarly, attending the regional lunch for your area is a great way to meet people. At the evening social events, ask many questions of whomever you meet. And of course, carry a lot of business cards!

George Savvides, Managing Partner at George L. Savvides & Co LLC (Nicosia)

Further to my previous response, it's important to follow up with any contacts you have made at the conference. Also aim to get involved with committees that interest you and actively participate as speaker, moderator or committee officer. The more IBA conferences you attend and get involved in, the greater the benefits.

This is the first time the conference has been held in the Middle East. How do you plan to make the most of your time in Dubai?

Akira Kawamura, President of the IBA

We are all so very excited about the 2011 IBA Annual Conference being held in the Middle East. Hosting the event in Dubai is the culmination of years of work and planning. We are hopeful that it will be our most successful conference to date. Delegate registration figures indicate that we are on track to fulfil this ambition. Although I am very much looking forward to attending a great number of the conference's plenary and working sessions, I am also hopeful, though I do not know how realistic I am being, to see some of the many wonderful sites and places of interest and excitement unique to Dubai. I would like to visit the tallest man-made structure ever built, the Burj Khalifa; visit the Old Bastakiya District and the Dubai Museum in Al Fahidi Fort; watch some camel racing; and spend a few days on some of Dubai's beautiful beaches. Unfortunately, my schedule may not be able to accommodate these activities. However, through some of the social events, such as the IBA welcome and closing parties, I am looking forward to experiencing some of the marvels of Dubai.

Patrick Ang, Partner at Rajah Tann (Singapore)

First and foremost, I am really looking forward to visiting my friends at Al Tamimi. We had wonderful exchanges back in June this year when we jointly organised a 'Doing Business in the Middle East' seminar in Singapore. I also hope to set aside some time to enjoy the sights of the dunes and other attractions particular to the unique Arabian culture.

Doug Jones, Partner at Clayton Utz (Sydney)

I plan to attend as many of the professional and social activities of the IBA as possible and also hope to take advantage of the visit to Dubai to understand both the legal and social culture of the United Arab Emirates.

David Rivkin, Debevoise & Plimpton LLP (New York & London)

This is a time of extraordinary change in the Middle East, and I am delighted that the IBA is in the region this year. I hope that I will have the chance to meet many lawyers from the region who will be attending the conference. I look forward to hearing their perspectives on current events and on the future of the region.

George Savvides, Managing Partner at George L. Savvides & Co LLC (Nicosia)

Attending the conference and the social functions associated with it is a full time job. However I plan to stay for an extra day to take to see Dubai and some of the numerous attractions that it has to offer.

For more information on the conference or the IBA membership, please visit: www.ibanet.org