

## BOOK REVIEW

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### A Review of *Succeeding as an Expert Witness*

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**REFERENCE:** Harold A. Feder, *Succeeding as an Expert Witness*, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York, N. Y., 1991. 252 pp.

It is a monumental undertaking to assemble material and write a book on a subject that crosses many disciplines and is designed to improve the role and function of the expert witness who ventures into the dispute-resolution process. Harold Feder is to be congratulated for the effort.

The eloquent Foreword by Thomas T. Noguchi, M.D., former Chief Medical Examiner-Coroner of Los Angeles County, California makes special reference to the candid and detailed references that experienced forensic witnesses made to a unique forensic expert questionnaire. The lessons learned from this survey are included in material throughout the book.

An example of use of the survey's answers is shown in Chapter 4 where the author summarizes the eight categories of methodology for keeping current:

- Reading professional literature,
- Being active in the field.
- Continuing Education/Certification,
- Research and Publishing,
- Teaching, lecturing and consulting.
- Attending seminars.
- Attending professional conferences and peer review.

While the book tends toward the simplistic, it may well be that the author wants to emphasize the basics and feels that when the expert witness masters the basic rules and understands the nature of the foundation for expert testimony, only when can he or she begin to consider the complexities that are so often encountered.

Throughout, the author gives summaries of cases to illustrate the messages that he is sending. Many of these illustrations are pertinent and hint at exciting methodology and detective work. Unfortunately, the reader is often left wanting to know more and with a desire to share in the solving of mysterious circumstances.

Nevertheless, the many cases are stimulating and cause the reader to use his imagination. Perhaps, since each instance where a forensic expert is retained is often quite unique, the details of the case-solving illustrations are not too significant. The author does point out that there is a sense of satisfaction when a working hypothesis is established. He characterized it as an essence of the scientific method.

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There is a great deal of information in Harold Feder's book and he combines the fundamentals of giving expert testimony with his observations on many aspects of the subject. He sets forth rules for the expert and for the attorney who engages the expert. He gives the reader much to think about, a guide to effective expertise and an overview of the practical application of the theories he espouses.