

Washington State Bar Association: **“Member Outreach/ Staying Relevant to Members”**

The WSBA understands that staying in touch with and relevant to members is pivotal to their success as a Bar Association that represents member’s interests. The WSBA wants members to feel proud of their bar and that it is their voice. To this end WSBA has a long-range strategic plan with member relevance as its #1 Goal.

WSBA Long-range Goal #1:

The WSBA will foster communication with and among members and provide value to their professional lives.

Each year the long-range planning committee operationalizes this goal with concrete action steps specific to the year.

In 2004, among other things, the Board:

- conducted a Bar News readership survey to determine what members wanted in the Bar news,
- held listening sessions with 9 county Bar associations (of 39),
- implemented Board member websites,
- developed the capacity for each Board member to communicate electronically with their constituents,
- added sponsored medical, long-term care, and disability insurance programs, and
- coordinated Board member attendance at minority bar annual dinners.

In 2005, sample actions include:

- developing Governor’s communication guidelines and goals (included here),
- holding listening sessions with local bars,
- assigning Board liaisons to all specialty and minority bar associations,
- appointing a Board representative to all committees and sections,
- implementing Casemaker as a free-to-members legal research tool,
- raise the visibility of the Bar Foundation to sponsor programs that help members, and
- reviewing our committee appointment process to take better advantage of members willing to serve the WSBA.
- add a diversity advocate position to WSBA Staff to concentrate on outreach to members who have traditionally felt unconnected to the WSBA
- implemented a “WSB Leadership Institute” to foster new leaders, particularly those of color, women and persons representing other forms of diversity

Other ongoing features of WSBA and WSBA Governance that promote relevance to members include:

- bylaws that adopts open meetings and open records provisions
- invitations for all interested groups to attend Board meetings (lunch provided)
- an ED “News Flash” after each Board meeting highlighting the actions of the Board mailed to all bar leaders (chairs of all committees and sections, all past Governors and presidents, local bar officers, law related groups, the Supreme Court, and anyone else wanting to receive it); also posted on the WSBA Website
- Bar News feature “Around the State” for members to share local news
- 2-3 “Road shows” annually taking Law Practice Management hints and suggestions to members in 15-20 communities (at no cost to attendees)
- One-stop help with member questions in the “Service Center” (bank of phone call receivers) with goal of 90% live person response
- Ethics call-in line for member questions about prospective ethics dilemmas
- Discipline diversions to HELP (counseling, advice, dispute resolution, law practice management assistance) members both before the filing of a formal grievance and after as part of stipulations

Communication Guidelines for Governors

Background

Governors' roles are myriad and broad; any activity must fit each individual Governor's style and preferences. The annual Operational Plan should guide Governors in picking activities that support the overall long range plan of the Board and WSBA but the need for member communication and outreach to minority, specialty and local bars to maintain relevance is paramount and always encouraged.

Recommendations for communication activities

- Establish a personal Governor Web page through WSBA.org
- Use "blast" email to constituents following the WSBA guidelines (short messages, no attachments, no more than once a month, etc)
- Submit occasional stories or reports to any local bar publications or meeting agendas for content, cut and paste elements of the News Flash, work with Jan or Judy to develop feature articles, point to new information on the Web)
- Phone contact Bar Presidents within district; stay in touch with them and their issues
- Encourage local bars to recognize local heroes and attend the presentation
- As time allows attend meetings, awards ceremonies, annual dinners, or other events for law related entities and bar associations
- Develop a "stump" speech about the WSBA, role of Governors, or special these and offer yourself to local business, trade, civic, or other organizations programs
- Help promote Law Week with local members

Allowable expenses

- Special mailings
- Business cards and letterhead
- Travel and other expenses for participating in other bar association, law related entity, and special events
- Token gifts, certificates, or acknowledgements for constituents or groups of constituents

Avoid Using WSBA Funds For

- Paid ads or paid space
- Fund raising events or registrations at events where the cost is significantly more than a meal or attendance fees

- Gifts or honorariums
- Donations or contributions

The WSBA Strives to be Relevant and to Stay in Touch with Members

A. We have governor liaisons to:

- 23 Sections
- 21 WSBA Committees
- 14 Specialty Bar Associations
- 8 Minority Bar Associations
- 6 Special Boards
 - Practice of Law Board
 - Mandatory Continuing Legal Education
 - Disciplinary Board
 - Washington State Bar Foundation
 - Licensed Practice Officers Board
 - Board of Judicial Administration

B. Governors Try to Stay in Touch with:

- 36 Local Bar Associations
- 21 Law-related Agencies

C. To Facilitate the Work of the Board, the Governors Have Formed:

- 15 Special BOG efforts in 2004-2005
- 14 Ongoing BOG Committees

D. Member “TOUCH” Points:

- WSBA CLEs
- Section Mid-year Meetings
- WSBA Blast E-mail
- Bar News
- De Novo
- Section Newsletters
- News Flash
- WSBA Website
- Committee Preference Forms
- Regulatory Touch Points
- Section Dues Notices
- License Renewals

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