

## **How to be a Section Liaison**

Every year a large number of members of the ABA Section of International Law are appointed to be liaisons to other organizations. To make the liaison function work effectively, it requires effort on the part of each liaison to work as a part of the overall Section team. We wanted to provide you with this quick guide to being a liaison so that you could make the most of your experience.

### Your Role

You have been appointed because of your special interest in and experience with the organization to which you are a liaison (your “Organization”). Your activity as a liaison is a great service to the Section for which we thank you. The reason the Section appointed a liaison to your Organization is that your Organization is one in which the Section has a keen interest. You, as the Section liaison, are the Section’s representative and, therefore, its “eyes and ears” with regard to your Organization. Your activity or lack thereof can set the tone for the relationship of the Section and your Organization for years to come. It can open up incredible doors to the Section or shut them tight. The role of a Section liaison, therefore, is an important one. The requisites for the job are a sense of interest in your Organization, a knowledge of the Section, and its activities in relation to the goals and activities of your Organization, enthusiasm for the Section, and, very importantly, frequent communication and interaction with both the Section and your Organization.

### How to Perform the Liaison Role

Upon agreeing to serve as a Section liaison, you will be added to the Liaison Listserve where you will receive regular communication between the Liaison Officer and Section staff. Below are our ideas of what a Section liaison can do to function effectively. Please feel free to add your own ideas. Imagination in performing a role, bringing a little of you to the task, is what sets the extraordinary apart from the ordinary.

### Do’s

- Attend meetings, conferences, and seminars and other events sponsored by your Organization. If possible, attend your Organization’s Council meetings.
- Take an active role in your Organization as the representative of the Section, offering your skills and counsel to advance the mission of your Organization through your knowledge of the Section’s activities.
- Sign up for your Organization’s listservs and newsletters to learn more about the organization and its activities.
- Solicit ideas from your Organization on how the Section could work together with your Organization to fulfill the missions of both organizations.
- Publicize Section events, committees, programming, publications, and opportunities to participate in Section activities to your Organization and its members. You will be

most successful in doing this when you have gained the trust and respect of the leadership of your Organization. Offer to provide Section information tactfully.

- Identify matters or opportunities in your Organization in which the Section and its members would likely have an interest and take an active role in networking your Organization with the applicable Section committee(s). In addition to widely disseminating the information, call or e mail or both the appropriate committee co-chairs and their Division Chair and make the connection. Reach out to all concerned in your Organization and in the Section.
- Develop ideas for joint projects, services, events, legislative initiatives, and other programming which would benefit both the Section and your Organization. Make sure that you do not commit the Section before checking with the Liaison Officer. (See “Some Minor Don’ts,” below.)
- Report regularly, on a quarterly basis or more often, to the Liaison Officer on your liaison activities, describing briefly major developments in your Organization and what opportunities may exist for the Section and its Members.
- Brainstorm with the Liaison Officer and other Section members and leaders about how to provide more effective liaison services to the Section and your Organization.

#### Some Minor Don’ts

- Don’t try to go too fast in promoting the Section. You are the best advertisement for the Section, and once the leadership of your Organization gets to know and respect you, the time will be right for this.
- Don’t make any decisions for the Section in connection with any activities. Speak to the Liaison Officer about any plans you want to make or proposals from your Organization for joint activities. The Liaison Officer will discuss the idea with you and help you determine whether the ideas are feasible in the context of the Council’s and top leadership’s plans for the Section. The Liaison Officer will also discuss the plans with other Section leadership and provide you a go-ahead for the proposed activity(ies).
- Don’t be too aggressive in promoting the Section. Be sensitive to your Organization’s leadership’s desires to retain all its members. But don’t let that stop you from making Section membership and activities available to your Organization’s members.

#### Finally

Do not hesitate to tell the Liaison Officer how you think a liaison to your Organization or any organization can be more effective. Thanks for your willingness to be a Section liaison to your Organization.