ABA Section on Antitrust
Committee Website Best Practices

The Four C’s Approach

Each Committee’s website is one of its most important opportunities to attract new members, and also to provide regular benefit and outreach to its existing members. A vibrant website that is filled with useful, current information will act as a great ambassador for both the Committee and the Section. But the converse is also true – a website that is stale, empty or difficult to navigate will not do anyone any good.

We recognize that maintaining a good, useful, current website is a substantial commitment by each Committee. But in the age of the internet, it is not an option; it is a commitment each Committee must take seriously.

What makes for a great website will, of course, vary from Committee to Committee. The following are some very basic principles to help you shape and maintain a great website for your Committee.

Content

First and most important, each Committee must make sure that it is providing useful information on its website. The specifics of that content will vary depending on the mission of the particular Committee. But in addition to basic information (such as an opening page greeting and description, contact information for the Committee’s leadership, and of course, how to get involved in the Committee) you should consider having at least the following links on your website:

- Current and archived newsletters.
- Substantive publications (books, treatises, etc.) by your Committee – give visitors a chance to buy them.
- Upcoming programs – and in particular, always make sure you are advertising your Committee’s Spring Meeting program(s) well in advance.
- Recently conducted programs.
- Hot topics/Recent developments (including court and agency decisions of interest as well as, where appropriate, legislative developments).
- External resources likely to be of interest to your membership. This may include links to appropriate federal and state agencies, ABA Task Forces, and the like.
- Listserv enrollment.
Currency

Even the best thought out website content is of limited use if that content has grown stale. Stale content also undermines the credibility of your Committee – when your website is advertising “hot topics” from the Clinton Administration, you’re not likely to impress passersby. Consider these ideas as ways to help keep your website fresh:

- Build a reminder onto your calendar to go back to the website immediately after an advertised program, to move it from the “upcoming” to “recent” program list.

- Make the state of the website (especially those parts most likely to become stale, such as programs and current developments) a regular agenda item for your monthly Committee Leadership calls.

- Don’t let website currency responsibility become an orphan. You should designate a Vice-Chair or appoint another responsible volunteer to act as your dedicated webmaster to keep the website’s content as current as possible.

   Some Committees have made Webmaster a rotating position. For this to work, the Committee Chair must be on top of the situation, and must make sure (1) the rotation periods are not so short that they may expire before any work is done and (2) the responsible individuals are very clear on their duties and their terms of office.

Keeping the website current will pay other dividends. If your Committee’s leadership is on top of current developments, you will also gain great fodder for the Committee’s newsletters, and you will have a good headstart toward annual ALD updating.

Clarity

A good website is also easily navigable. That means your Committee’s home page is critical. A home page that seems lifeless and devoid of content may be all a visitor ever bothers to check out; the same is true for a home page that seems to consist entirely of a long, undifferentiated speech by the Committee Chair. Be creative, and think of the home page as an opportunity to draw visitors in to the other content your website has to offer.

The Section’s staff is extremely skilled, and can implement just about whatever you like; they can also discuss with you ideas for how to organize your website. But be proactive – check out the websites of some other Committees, and you are bound to find some new and different ideas that may improve your site. For example, consider these options to help visitors find what they’re seeking:

- Avoid blathering on. Keep your description/greeting section concise and focused.
• Make your description/greeting section an interactive tool by building live links in it – for example, if your greeting/description describes ongoing Committee activities such as your listserv or newsletter, build a link to them right into your greeting.

• Highlight upcoming events (such as programs or publications) – literally, put them in bold or, better yet, insert a link to them.

• Also highlight recently held programs, and don’t forget to thank your volunteers.

Clearances

To the extent you publish any articles or other third party materials on your website, the Section’s usual rules about copyright infringement apply. The appropriate author release forms can be found on the leadership portal.