Ways to keep your members

1. Non-Profit Law Committee: This committee was formed not only to assist attorneys who represent non-profit entities, but also to aid attorneys who are board members of non-profits. They are sponsoring a number of informational programs and seminars during the year that deal with tax issues faced by non-profits, ethical issues for attorneys on boards, common questions attorneys on non-profit boards deal with, including contract and employee issues, and a multitude of other similar matters. We have had a small membership increase since forming this committee as the word reached attorneys out of the local legal mainstream and they decided to join the CBA in order to participate in the committee activities. —Cincinnati Bar

2. Think Outside the Box: Environmental Law Committee took a behind the scenes look at the “greening” of our local zoo with a social that followed. Partnering with the Zoo provided new contacts for the committee members. —Cincinnati Bar

3. Partner with a development company that is re-vitalizing the city and tour their new initiatives. Important for members to make contacts and be informed of city initiatives. —Cincinnati Bar

4. Reach out to the local Chamber of Commerce to identify ways for your committees to network with potential clients through free programs at the chamber. Organize a group to attend. —Indianapolis Bar

5. Provide committees with at least two and no more than five specific goals for the year. This will keep your volunteers engaged and help eliminate the possibility of wasting volunteer time (ultimately causing loss of interest). The goals should come from the Bar’s leadership well in advance of the beginning of the year in order to hit the ground running. —Indianapolis Bar

6. Use a Sunset Committee. Every 2-3 years undertake a thorough review of your Sections and Committees to determine their current value to the membership. It may be time to update purposes, provide a pep talk or simply disband in favor of more current needs. —Indianapolis Bar

7. Hold a retreat for your incoming chairs. It will help them focus in on goals and help build your leadership pipeline through networking. —Indianapolis Bar

8. Partnership Committees: Lawyers for the Arts partners with local arts organizations to provide speakers and volunteer attorneys for small arts organizations. —Cincinnati Bar

9. Opportunities: Attend committee meetings where members are highly engaged. Take away ideas about how to translate their momentum to other committees. —Cincinnati Bar

10. Committee Chairs are encouraged to write an article about their practice and/or their committee. Each month our CBA Report profiles a committee leader. —Cincinnati Bar
11. Schedule quarterly or semi-annual update meetings with all committee leaders to identify opportunities for increased engagement. Ask each chair to provide information on challenges and successes. Address what is shared by following up with chairs to provide support.

12. Location, location, location…..What opportunities are there to engage members who are not in close proximity to the bar? Can other members host meetings? Determine where members work and what might encourage them to participate….is location important?

13. Look to the substantive law sections to provide input and faculty for CLE programs. We partner with our sections to produce these programs as well, so that we ensure we are providing the members with information and legal education that they care about and is relevant to their practice.

- Maine Bar

14. Hold an annual section/committee chair orientation. Invite them to a working breakfast or luncheon and discuss the importance sections/committees play in the Association as a whole, and provide guidance to the chairs on their roles and responsibilities, as well as how they can provide meaningful value to the organization. Provide them with reference materials to help guide them throughout the year – we are in the process of updating our Section Leader notebooks. These notebooks include leadership roles, reporting procedures, staff contact information and key policies/procedures with which section chairs need to be familiar (i.e. CLE, reporting to the Board of Governors, legislative, amicus briefs, budget).

- Maine Bar

15. Hold an annual legislative lunch. We invite all section chairs, section legislative liaisons and the Association’s lobbyist to a working lunch. The ED and the lobbyist first discuss the legislative policies/procedures of the organization, the current make-up of the legislature, and legislative priorities of the Association. We then go around the room and have each section provide guidance to the lobbyist on bills that are of interest to the section, or that the section wants followed closely.—Maine Bar

16. Be responsive and proactive with committees. Ideas for new committees and programs can come directly from current committee meetings that you attend as a bar leader.

17. Divide and conquer. If you have a staff working with you on committees, divide the committees and assign them to a specific staff member to follow-up and follow through on programs and projects. - Cincinnati Bar

18. Recognize committees for their creative programming and membership engagement. We have an annual Ingenuity Award. Committees are sent a letter from a Board member encouraging them to apply. They are recognized at their meeting with a lunch and then with a profile in the CBA Report. The award is presented to the committee by our President at a Board meeting. - Cincinnati Bar

19. 5K Run for Kids Committee: Raises funds for ProKids, an advocate for children in the local court system. This pipeline initiative has helped to identify future leaders because of the range of small to large ways to volunteer. Two current co-chairs on YLS Board are from this committee. - Cincinnati Bar

20. Social Networking

Social Networking: All committees have a LinkedIn page and a committee page on the CBA’s website. Work with Committee Chairs on how to maximize their presence on the social networking pages by posting articles and starting discussions. Refer potential members to the committee pages where members are highly engaged. — Cincinnati Bar

21. Women Lawyers Committee listened to our members who wanted more options for connecting. We alternate between social gatherings and substantive programming. We had sold out events for the Duck Boat, the local symphony’s Lollipop Concert, over 100 registrations for the CLE focused on Women in the Law, and have started an informal Coffee and Conversation once a month for early morning networking. Touch points keep members engaged and interested.—Cincinnati Bar

22. Our President-Elect is co-chair of our member services committee. Her involvement and understanding of our outreach is communicated to our bar leadership at the Board meetings. She shares the perspective of the Bar leadership with the committee members and her voice on the Board keeps them engaged with membership initiatives. - Cincinnati Bar

23. Invite committee leaders to meet with potential members who have questions about member engagement or the value of membership. Ask them to share their “story of engagement and value.”
32. Provide opportunities for seasoned attorneys and new attorneys to network. We held a CLE at the law school where seasoned practitioners made presentations to law students and new/young lawyers about law practice management, and then we held a reception at the end for folks to network. During the reception, we found it provided opportunities for the new attorneys to ask questions, mentor/mentee relationships were formed, there were discussions about possible employment fits, and even some discussions about solo firm transition opportunities from the seasoned attorneys to the new attorneys. –Maine Bar

33. We hold an annual two-day Bridging the Gap program for newly admitted attorneys. Topics include: ethics; solo, small, mid and large firm presentations; substantive area of law presentations; law school debt and finances; New Lawyer Section presentation; view from the bench; Maine Assistance Program presentation; MSBA presentation; etc. This program provides these new attorneys with all of the required CLE credits for their first two years of practice. –Maine Bar

24. Ask them what their interests are outside the law and use those ideas to create new committees. Example, many Indianapolis Bar Association members are environmentally aware/concerned. So, their YLD formed a Go Green Committee. They have developed a variety of initiatives from planting trees in the community to certifying law firms as “green” for their compliance with a program created by the committee. –Indianapolis Bar

26. Collaborate with other professional groups. Planning networking events or programs of mutual interest with realtors, CPAs, etc. helps young lawyers build networks for potential business. –Indianapolis Bar

27. Identify partners in leadership roles who can collaborate with you on potential associates or new attorneys in their office who they identify as future leaders. Schedule coffee with a small group or individual to talk about the varying roles of leadership in the Bar. –Cincinnati Bar

29. Communicate new programs and services and share your successes with members through social networking and e-mail. Staying connected to a successful organization can be empowering. –Cincinnati Bar

30. Be specific. Tailor communications to the member. Use your electronic newsletters to data mine for interest areas and build content specific to the member. It’s much more affordable and easy to deliver than you might imagine. –Indianapolis Bar

31. Identify law school liaisons for your YLS Board. If you can engage the local students before they graduate, the likelihood of them continuing as bar members may increase. –Cincinnati Bar

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34. Partner with local law schools. Our YLS Board organized a social with the Student Bar Association Boards of our local law schools. This provided a time to learn more about the issues the students are facing, but, also required that our YLS leaders be more highly engaged. –Cincinnati Bar

35. Leadership Retreat: Our YLS Board has an annual retreat right after elections and committee chairs have changed. The new YLS Chair works on the agenda and asks the new leaders to work on their agenda for the next year. Each committee then reports back to the YLS Board at the conclusion of the retreat. –Cincinnati Bar

36. Mentoring in the community provides an opportunity for young lawyers to interact with other attorneys with a commitment to providing community support. Connecting keeps them engaged. –Cincinnati Bar

37. Provide opportunities for “ownership.” The YLS Public Relations Committee has a quarterly e-newsletter where they reach out to members and ask them to write a brief article based on the theme of the e-news. Seeing your name in print increases the feeling of ownership. –Cincinnati Bar

28. Dedicate a Column

Dedicate a column, page, section, etc. in your quarterly publication to the new/young lawyers. It keeps the membership up-to-date on what they are doing or interested in, and it gives the new/young lawyers an opportunity to showcase what they have to offer or to get published. –Maine Bar

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38. Say thank you!
A simple word of thanks when they renew/join. A thank you card when they volunteer. Personal outreach makes a world of difference. It takes a moment, but can pay off for years to come. –Indianapolis Bar

39. We now offer three hours of free CLE with membership renewal. These three hours are only available with certain live programs and video replays, and are not available at our flagship programs such as Legal Year in Review or the Annual and Summer Meetings. It is the responsibility of the member to “cash in” their hours each year and the free hours are not transferable nor do they carry over from year to year. –Maine Bar

40. More is not necessarily better! We all want to do as much as we can for our members, but due to limited staff resources and budgets we can’t do it all. And often when we try to do too much, we lose sight of the stuff we are really good at, we drop the ball in areas that we shouldn’t, and we dilute our message. Pick five (or whatever number suits the size of your Association and staff) key things that you offer as an Association, and be able to clearly articulate those benefits and/or services. This is your meat and potatoes…the other stuff is just gravy. –Maine Bar

41. Membership analysis: Determine where you are gaining members and where membership is declining. Identify key members who are engaged and are advocates of bar membership. Reach out to them to share your ideas about possible programs and services that might attract new members in these categories. Follow up with key members to keep them informed and engaged regarding your progress.

42. Hand written thank you notes. A personal touch shows that you appreciate them taking time and that you took the time to say thank you in a special way! –Dallas Bar

43. Provide easy access to services. Immediate gratification is a staple in our society. If they have to wait for the office to open to get an answer to a question or view a CLE you are not providing service at the level needed by your members. Update your website. Invest in online education development. Again, it’s more affordable that you might realize. –Indianapolis Bar

44. Reach out to NABE members to ask what is working for them! Share ideas through committees, at conferences and with individuals. –Cincinnati, Indianapolis and Maine Bars

45. Coffee and conversation with potential members and current members provides personalized attention for members. A thirty minute meeting to share information about current initiatives will provide opportunities for you to personalize how you connect members to the activities and programs that will keep them engaged.

46. One of our favorite events is the Diversity Potluck Luncheon. We encourage members of the Toledo Bar and all the affinity bars in the area to bring a dish to share at our annual lunch. It is optional, but we recommend ethnic, family, and traditional dishes. It is a very popular event and not only brings in the “regulars,” but also attorneys who only come around for this special lunch. –Toledo Bar

47. Outreach to new graduates thinking about joining the Bar should include a brief handout on the Young Lawyer initiatives and upcoming programs and events. Find individualized ways for them to become more involved. Follow up after your meeting with specifics and an invitation. –Cincinnati Bar

48. Survey members to make sure you are aware of their priorities for membership. Follow up by sharing what you learned and showing how you will work toward meeting their needs. –Cincinnati Bar

49. Assess member benefits on an on-going basis. We have a Membership Committee that is focused on obtaining and retaining members; one of the charges is to assess member benefits to ensure they are relevant, worthwhile to the member and to the Association, etc. –Maine Bar

50. Know where you stand – on a national and local level. How is membership for other associations? What initiatives may be repeated and which should be sunset? Determine where you have growth potential and focus on these areas. Schedule time on your calendar for assessment and reviewing the numbers. –Cincinnati Bar