

CHAPTER 21: CLOSING OUT YOUR BAR YEAR

A. Planning for the Transition to the Next Chair of Your Organization

Planning for the transition to the next group of leaders is essential to the continued success of your organization. This planning needs to commence approximately three months before the end of your term. At that time, a review needs to be made of ongoing projects and other organizational work. A decision needs to be made as to what can be finalized and what will need to be put off until the next year. As the bar year approaches the end, a list of uncompleted projects, committee work, and other ongoing activity of the YLS should be made by the outgoing leader so that they may be passed to the next group.

B. Communicating the Change in Leadership

Communication to other bar organizations of the change of leadership is important: The ABA should be notified. The senior bar should be notified of the change in leadership. Other affiliates within the state should be notified of the change or, if you are a state organization, notification should be made to other affiliates in the region with which you have occasional contact.

You should use your organization's newsletter to publicize the change of leadership so that the general membership can be aware of and involved in the change of leadership. The newsletter, or if you don't have a newsletter, a general mailing, is an excellent tool to keep the general membership up-to-date with changes. This notification should be made during the last month of your bar year.

C. Communication of the Knowledge and Experience of the Outgoing Chair

The outgoing chair has experience from which an organization can draw. Near the end of your term as a Chair, you should hold a meeting with the incoming Chair, as well as other officers and any key persons within the organization, such as staff. This gives the outgoing chair the opportunity to identify incomplete projects and committee work as well as to alert the organization of any potential problems. Last, this gives the Chair the chance to express new ideas as to what public service projects may be appropriate.

You should make a final report of association activities to the senior bar, if appropriate. The report serves as a means to communicate the accomplishments of the association and serves as a summary of the year for association planning purposes.

The outgoing chair often has the insight, from working with various persons within the YLS, to identify future leaders of the organization. This is an excellent opportunity for the Chair to pass on this information to the incoming leaders.

D. Remaining Involved in the Organization

The Chair of the organization has experience that should be utilized on an ongoing basis. The “retiring” chair should remain on the long range planning committee, if your organization has such a committee. If not, the retiring chair can be utilized for a planning resource. The retiring chair should also remain on the board as an ex officio member. Often the Chair has developed ties with senior bar members and with others within the ABA and other affiliates. From time to time the immediate past chair can be utilized to accomplish projects and contact people that might otherwise be difficult to do.

E. Award

As a part of the way to thank those who have worked hard, you should consider presenting awards to various members of the organization. An appropriate time to present these awards might be at the final meeting of your bar year. This is a good chance to have a final social event that can be utilized for the joint purpose of welcoming new board members and thanking the outgoing board members.

The new chair should recognize the work of the outgoing chair with an award. The Chair-Elect of the organization is in a position to be in charge of this award and present it, again perhaps at the final social event of the year.

F. Thank Yous

Thank yous should be made shortly after the bar year comes to a close. For the most part, these should be personal messages by the Chair to the various members of the organization that have held key positions or have done an outstanding job with programs. Often these include board members and committee chairs. Although verbal thank yous are certainly in order, nothing can replace a personal note from the Chair at this point in time.

This is also an appropriate time for the outgoing Chair to do a little PR work with the senior bar and other affiliates, if appropriate. Letters thanking the senior bar for its cooperation and support often helps with communication at later dates.