

CHAPTER 8: CREATE IN ADVANCE A WORKING PLAN

The Chair-Elect should prepare a working plan well before assuming office as chair. Once the bar year has commenced, it is too late to begin planning. The Chair-Elect must meet often with the core group of “idea” people. Prior to creating the working plan, it is essential that the incoming leadership have exhaustive discussions with existing leadership, seeking their suggestions, criticisms and complaints. They should discuss in particular projects that need revitalization. Creation of this working plan should begin at least three months prior to the incoming leadership’s assumption of office, but preferably six months in advance.

A. Draft a Checklist of Things to Do and Benchmarks

Once all of the foregoing evaluations and determinations are concluded, you must commit your working plan to writing. Although it may sound trite, this working plan will be the road map that keeps the affiliate on course.

This written plan should include, at a minimum, the following:

1. Identification of all committees to function during the bar year;
2. Identification of all committee chairs, vice-chairs and, as soon as possible, members;
3. Identification of all projects to be undertaken during the bar year, with assignment of such projects to specific committees;
4. Identification of all affiliate, executive council, officers’ and directors’ meetings to be held during the year;
5. Identification of target dates for accomplishment of each of the foregoing; and
6. Analysis of the budget (availability of funds and allocation thereof).

B. Draft Skeleton Calendar for the Year and Agendas for Each Board Meeting

Once a year’s activities and plans are identified, they should be calendared. You may want to purchase a large poster-sized or desk-top calendar, especially one with legal holidays noted on it, to help you map out the dates and events. Or you may simply choose to use Outlook to ensure that your young lawyer section “YLS” calendar does not conflict with your other professional commitments. This calendar should include dates for every single meeting, project and activity to be held during the bar year. In establishing this calendar, the drafter should have at least one previous year’s calendar for that affiliate, if not two (to use as a guide). You will also need to review the by-laws, so that your nomination and election procedures are begun on time. Familiarity with the by-laws will be crucial at many stages in your presidency.

In determining the calendar, the drafter must select a regular time and place for Executive, Board and Committee Chair meetings. These meetings may be held on a designated day of each week during each month, etc., but must be scheduled in advance as a regular event, so that those who attend will have plenty of advance notice and can mark their personal

calendars. Notices of the meetings sent just before the meetings take place provide an additional reminder.

The Chair should try, to the greatest extent possible, to schedule Executive Committee and Board or Council meetings just prior to the meeting of the senior bar's Board of Directors/Governors. For instance, if the Board of Directors/Governors meets the third Thursday of the month, your meeting should be the previous week, so you can be assured of input regarding each issue that concerns the young lawyers' section.

In setting up the calendar it is essential to consult with officers and staff of the affiliate's senior bar to ensure the absence of conflicts. The affiliate should not schedule a meeting or project in conflict with a senior bar activity.

In compiling agendas for executive council and board meetings, it is essential to review agendas and minutes of meetings held during the past few years. This review will provide continuity, while also posing as a built-in mechanism for ensuring that the ideas of past leadership together with the projects of previous administrations are considered and followed through on.

Officers of your organization should also be consulted for their ideas on issues to be covered at each meeting, as the officer are a great source of information and support!

Each agenda should follow the same format and should provide for, at minimum, and introduction of the Board (and guests), reports of officers, reports of committees (that are present), a budget update, and identification of upcoming meetings (especially the next successive meeting). There should also be a segment for discussion of new projects and ideas. Beyond this, the drafter of the agenda should tailor it to in a manner most beneficial to the particular needs of the affiliate.

The draft agenda put together at the start of the bar year can then be fine-tuned just before the first meeting; and it can also be used as a template for each successive meeting.

In Appendix A, at A-1 is a copy of an Agenda that you may consider using.

C. Be Ready to Modify Your Plan When Necessary

From time to time, events may dictate change. The organization and its leadership must constantly monitor and evaluate the affiliate's progress through the year. If certain projects, ideas or schedules are not working, flexibility is required. The ability to adapt to changing circumstances is the hallmark of leadership. While the working plan, calendar and agendas are necessary to complete the bar year successfully, the affiliate must not develop blind adherence to them, or become so rigid that it cannot cope with changed circumstances.