

## CHAPTER 20: STAFF OR NO STAFF

### A. When Staff is Available

A young lawyer leader's effective use of bar association staff can be a key factor in the success and productivity of his term as president. Young lawyer chairs, as volunteers, must carry on their law practice while serving as chair. The staff person, on the other hand, has as his sole responsibility the efficient management of the young lawyer organization. Tapping this resource can greatly increase the effectiveness of the young lawyers section and can relieve a tremendous burden from the chair's shoulders.

#### 1. Begin Your Term With a List of Objectives

During your year as chair-elect, you should meet with staff to discuss objectives and set priorities for the next year. You should discuss with staff member(s) the issues you find important, the areas you are interested in changing and the goals you would like to accomplish during your term. Keep in mind that your goals can include setting up mechanisms or laying groundwork for projects that will occur long after your term has ended.

Once the staff person is aware of your priorities, he or she can review and flag for you programs or items of interest from the voluminous materials sent every day to the bar offices. A staff person who is aware of your particular concerns and the areas in which you are willing to devote extra time will be more likely to respond to the many simultaneous demands in a prioritized fashion.

#### 2. Identify the Respective Roles You Expect to Play

During the organizational period, tell the staff exactly how much time and effort you can spend during your term and the time commitment you expect from staff members. Most staff persons have worked with young lawyer leaders, and know how to shift from project to project as the need arises.

Identify the roles you expect for you as chair, your officers, committee chairs and for the staff person. This can be as simple as deciding who goes to which meetings, and who is in charge of setting up the timetable or sending out weekly meeting agendas. Although allowances must always be made for emergencies, a last-minute attempt to divert responsibilities to the staff person which at the outset were designated as the chair's or an officer's responsibility can only serve to frustrate your goals.

If you are fortunate enough to have a full-time staff person, be sure to delegate sufficient duties and responsibilities to keep the person busy. If on the other hand you share a staff person with the senior bar or other organization, clarify at the start of the bar year the precise amount of time the staff member owes your young lawyers organization.

In many cases the staff person has a specific job description to which he must adhere; agreements you make outside of those administrative duties, especially those which relate to

your particular time constraints, must be clear from the outset in order to provide for a smooth operation of the organization.

### 3. Appropriate Duties for Staff Person

There are a variety of activities that a staff member may undertake depending on the person's time availability, interest and capabilities and the needs of the YLS. Appropriate activities include:

- Financial:*
- \* Assist in preparation of annual budget
  - \* Draft monthly cash reports
  - \* Handle reimbursements, obtaining YLS Treasurer's approval on each
  - \* Keep track of inventories of publications; take care of sales of same
- Planning:*
- \* Plan lunches, receptions, dinners and such events, including obtaining room, setting menu, sending out announcements, placing advertisements in the newspapers; attending events and collecting money, registering guests, etc.
  - \* Plan arrangements for committee chairs and directors meetings; call to remind officers and committee chairs of upcoming meetings
  - \* Maintain master calendar of events for the bar year; check with other bar organizations before scheduling events so as to avoid conflicts
- Membership:*
- \* Enroll new members – keep up list in computer
  - \* Talk on telephone to members
  - \* Take care of members' concerns, requests or information, etc.
- General:*
- \* Liaise with staff of other bar organizations
  - \* Liaise with ABA/YLD Staff
  - \* Send Chair summaries of ideas for projects and programs
  - \* Attend YLS meetings and programs
  - \* Obtain plaques and certificates for special presentations

### 4. Involve the Staff Person in Attaining Your Goals

A staff person who feels responsible for things you want accomplished and who is included in decision-making is more likely to perform conscientiously. It is wise to include staff in preliminary meetings along with other key persons upon whose support you are depending. Once staff has made an appearance and has been involved in the formulation of specific projects, he or she will be more inclined to follow through.

Be aware of the staff's personal level of enthusiasm for certain projects or issues. You cannot expect a staff person to be thrilled with every idea you have. If the staff is unenthusiastic or opposed to a particular project, you may want to delegate to someone else, or to a committee, to undertake the project. On the other hand, take advantage of the staff person's enthusiasm and support for certain projects. Give more leeway in decision-making and organization of those

projects to the staff person. That way, energy is directed positively towards accomplishment of your goals, and you are free to pursue other issues.

#### 5. Use Bar Association Staff for Administrative Tasks

When a young lawyer leader assumes leadership responsibilities, he or she is often tempted to re-arrange the administrative component of the organization. In an efficiently-run bar association, however, the job of the staff person should not change drastically from leader to leader. Unnecessary involvement with administrative tasks will leave you less time to deal with your association's substantive concerns.

As Chair, you may have a responsibility to oversee certain staff functions. A good rule to follow is to see how things were done in the past before changing them. To the extent that the staff performs certain administrative functions efficiently, *i.e.*, preliminary budget preparation, committee correspondence, general association correspondence, organizing luncheon meetings, etc., let the staff person continue to monitor or perform those activities.

In an ideal situation, the administration of the organization is neatly left up to the staff person, and the leadership is provided by the Chair. However, in many cases, a full-time staff person is not available. Young lawyer leaders may share a staff person with other bar association committees or sections. Some extra time must be taken in these cases for communication between the volunteer lawyer leaders to assure that the shared resource of the staff person is used to the best advantage of the sections involved.

#### 6. Use Your Bar Association Staff to Recruit Young Lawyer Leaders

Effective use of our bar staff requires soliciting their judgment in recruiting young lawyer committee chairs or project heads. As Chair, you have a time period during which you have a responsibility to appoint able and competent young lawyers to head committees or certain projects, or serve on boards of community groups. Whatever the length of your term in office, the appointments you make to head young lawyer projects or to serve on community boards may long outlive your term as Chair.

From your practice and your association you have a group of colleagues to draw upon. The bar administrator should also be consulted, however, particularly for appointments of young lawyers to projects where their energy will largely dictate the success or failure of the project. At a minimum the staff person should be consulted during your appointment process. A full-time staff person may have a broader view of the legal community than that of you and your colleagues. For example, he or she may be performing as staff liaison to the various committees or sections, and may be more aware than you of the person who is coming up in the ranks, and have expressed an interest in working on certain events or projects.

To assure that a voluntary organization keeps its wheels in motion, the key persons must have the time and commitment to devote themselves to whatever undertaking they are appointed. A staff person, particularly one who has held the position for a number of years, is in a particularly good position to spot and recruit young attorneys who are going to be able to put

forth the effort to keep the volunteer organization moving. At the same time, the bar administrator may have developed a sixth sense about those who are merely looking for the title but are not able to do the work.

In addition to making specific contacts, the bar administration is in good position to flag new members. Most organizations have new members joining on a daily basis, and such information is readily available to the staff. New members often join in order to become actively involved, and should be enlisted in activities as soon as possible. The help of the administrator is invaluable in this area as he is often the first contact a new member makes with the bar association.

#### 7. Use Bar Association Staff as a Resource

Communication among bar associations generally first arrives at the bar headquarters and filters down to the staff person if it refers to young lawyer projects or events. The staff person is likely to have collected information on various subjects, and in this way can serve as a resource person. Using the staff as a resource can save time and often connect groups who may be doing work which is duplicative. Before attempting certain projects or addressing certain issues, the Chair should tap the resources of the staff person who is most likely to have outside information.

#### 8. Use Bar Association Staff as Historian

Young lawyer leaders usually turn over yearly; the staff person is constant. In the same way the staff person should be used as a resource, the staff or the bar association records should be used to find out what has been done in the past. Many young lawyer projects are cyclical. Judicial review programs, start-up seminars for young lawyers, job surveys, peer review programs and other similar programs are likely to occur frequently during a five-year period, but not often enough so that one young lawyer chair will remember that the same program was presented five years ago. The staff person may remember who worked on certain projects and who should be recontacted.

#### B. NO STAFF AVAILABLE

If you do not have a staff person, even one shared with another organization, you and your officers, as well as your personal secretaries, have your work cut out for you. Before undertaking all of the administrative responsibilities on your own, however, first contact the senior bar about using their staff person part of the time, *i.e.*, a few hours a day. If the senior bar does not have one or is unwilling to share, you should seriously press for the funds to hire someone for the YLS, even if only part-time. It is very difficult to operate as a top-flight bar organization without the assistance of a staff person. Lack of such a resource can limit what you can achieve.

Nevertheless, if you or your senior bar absolutely cannot afford to hire a staff person, then it is critically important that you meet with your officers very early in the planning stages to go over and delegate the primarily administrative tasks that you will need to undertake. Some of the responsibilities will logically be delegated to certain officers—*i.e.*, collection of membership

dues and preparation of financial reports can be done by the Treasurer; correspondence on behalf of the organization, placing announcements about events in periodicals, and maintenance of member records by the Secretary. You will need to delegate responsibilities for CLE and other programs to a programs committee chair and the substantive committee chairs will be responsible for putting together their own programs.

Unfortunately, the burden for the lack of staff falls most squarely on the shoulders of the Chair of the YLS. While the Chair in any event generates substantial outgoing correspondence from his or her office, in the absence of a staff person he or she will be responsible for sending out meeting announcements and agendas and letters for programs, projects, scheduling, etc.

One particular problem area will be the lack of someone to answer the telephone on behalf of the YLS. Assuming that your organization has office space, or shares office space, and you have a telephone line dedicated to your organization, you may want to use an answering machine to answer calls when no officer or member is taking care of the phone. Or you may want to designate and announce certain office hours when someone will be in the bar offices. If there is no YLS telephone, then phone calls should be directed to the office at which one of the officers, preferably the Chair, works.

Although it can be burdensome to operate without staff, it is by no means impossible. In fact, once you have set up your operation and delegated responsibility, it should run quite smoothly. Nevertheless, without a staff person, your organization will be somewhat restricted in its ability to grow or expand and to undertake major projects.