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[A New Look at Character & Fitness for the Bar](#)

Some Would-Be Lawyers Face Another Hurdle with Character and Fitness: A Criminal Record

Should convicted felons be able to become lawyers, provided that they have moved on from their criminal past? And if not, then what does that say about rehabilitation and re-entry as a central goal for the penal system? Washington and Maine are two states that had to grapple with those questions recently, when two prospective lawyers with criminal records faced challenges with their character and fitness tests—one was initially blocked from taking the bar exam but successfully appealed, and the other prevailed after a two-day hearing, spending \$25,000 in the process. [The New York Times](#) offers more details about their stories, and raises some questions about how boards of bar examiners can protect the public without being perhaps unnecessarily harsh.

Getting to Know You ? So We Can Disagree More Effectively

Whether in the office or in the boardroom, does your bar association have a culture in which dissenters are afraid to speak up—even if the executive director or president has said that it's good and productive to disagree at times? If so, then maybe it's personal. That is, there could be people at all levels of the org chart or board roster who wield subtle, yet effective power to squelch dissent. How do you break that down and build something better? At [Associations Now](#), Mark Athitakis recommends making sure that members of the staff or the board know each other as people, not just adversaries—and yes, sometimes that means icebreakers.

For the Legal Profession, Does a Failure to Adapt Come at a High Price?

The average law firm is losing \$74,100 per lawyer each year, and the average attorney bills 156 fewer hours than a decade ago. Why? "Law firms have not been stepping up and introducing bold strategies, so they are unprepared for the rapid transformations sweeping the legal industry," according to James W. Jones, senior fellow at Georgetown University Law's Center for the Study of the Legal Profession. Jones, the lead author of a study released recently by the Georgetown center and the Thomson Reuters Legal Executive Institute, talked with [Big Law Business](#) about these and other sobering findings from the research.

Want to Engage Your New Members? Make a Plan and Track it Well

Speaking of research, a recent study found that while 60 percent of association professionals said they want to track new member engagement using an index or scoring system, only 11 percent are actually doing so. Why should associations of all sizes make a new member engagement plan and then track its success? Top reasons cited in the survey (from Dynamic Benchmarking, LLC, and Kaiser Insights, LLC) included feedback about what members value and why they joined, and more detailed information about each member. At [Associations Now](#), Tim Ebner shares more thoughts about new member engagement plans—and some advice from one of the study's authors.



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