Communicators Talk

NABE Communications Section ▪ March 2008

The Chair's Column

By Mark Mathewson, Section Chair, Illinois State Bar Association

First things first—thanks to Alexa Giacomini, Jeanne Barker, and Sarah Coole, our new *Communicators Talk* editorial and production team. They replace the all-but-irreplaceable René Eichem, who was also secretary of the Communications Section and assistant executive director of the Kansas Bar Association.

René—the Kansas Tornado, as some of us affectionately knew her—left bar work in November and is happily ensconced as executive director of the Kansas Rural Communities Foundation. I miss the energy and enthusiasm she brought to the NABECOMM executive council, the newsletter, and everything she did for and with us, and I wish her the best. So just walk away, René. You won't see me followin' you back home. (You Left Banke fans know what I'm talking about. Both of you.)

And I also tip my hat to the new appointees to our Web site committee, chaired by Veronica Cordova of the executive council and the State Bar of New Mexico. They are Brad Comer, systems administrator for the Chicago Bar Association; Colleen Evans, director of membership services at the Ohio State Bar Association; Jenn Moreira, director of Web services at the State Bar of Arizona (she demoed her bar's cool intranet at the NABE Midyear Meeting in L.A.); and Steve Valdez, director of communications at the Louisville Bar Association. Thanks, all, for stepping up.

And speaking of the Midyear in L.A., I'm pleased to announce that Eric Mann, executive director of the Clark County (Nevada) Bar, declared his intention at that meeting to host the 2009 NABECOMM workshop in Las Vegas. I don't need to tell you that Vegas is one of the world's great convention cities, with plenty of affordable hotel space and lots to see and do. And accessible? It's so accessible you can fly there nonstop from Spring-

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field, Illinois. That, my friends, is the very definition of accessible. Austin in '08, Vegas in '09—it dudn't get any better.

Finally, I note that nomination season will soon be upon us, and no, I'm not talking about *those* nominations. I'm talking about nominations to the NABE Communications Section Executive Council, which we'll soon be soliciting. If you'd like to throw your hat into the ring, watch the NABE-COMM discussion group for an announcement in the next month or two.

CEO Communication During Times of Change

By Joyce Hastings, Communications Director, State Bar of Wisconsin (2006 NABE Annual Meeting, Honolulu, Hawaii)

Communication with employees must be honest, candid, and ethical. Developing a program of ongoing, regular employee communication sets the stage for communication in times of crisis or change management. Successful communication recognizes the importance of the following:

- **Trust** (you trust your employees, and employees trust the association to consider their interests when making decisions). *Lack of trust is the most important factor, as it is a barrier to engaging your employees, managing change, creating a successful organization.*
- **Involvement** (employees want to play a part in the decisions affecting them)
- **Line of sight** (employees understand how their jobs affect the association's performance)
- **Connection to the marketplace** (employees understand the environment in which the company does business—customers/members, competitors, the impact of the economy on our association/business units)

CEO communication directly impacts employee engagement, retention

Research shows:

- the more engaged your employees are, the more successful the organization. Engaged employees are passionate about their jobs and the organization's success, understand the connection between their work and the organization's business strategy, and believe they make a difference.
- employees are more willing to invest extra effort in the organization's success if they believe senior leadership is interested in their well-being. Employees want face-to-face communication with the CEO. They want to hear from the source that the organization is doing the right things to build success. Employees look to their immediate supervisor for rewards and recognition, and development and learning opportunities.
- CEO communication is the leading factor in employee motivation, morale, and loyalty. There is a direct connection between the executive's ability to communicate the big picture and employee satisfaction and retention.

Employees cannot follow someone they cannot see

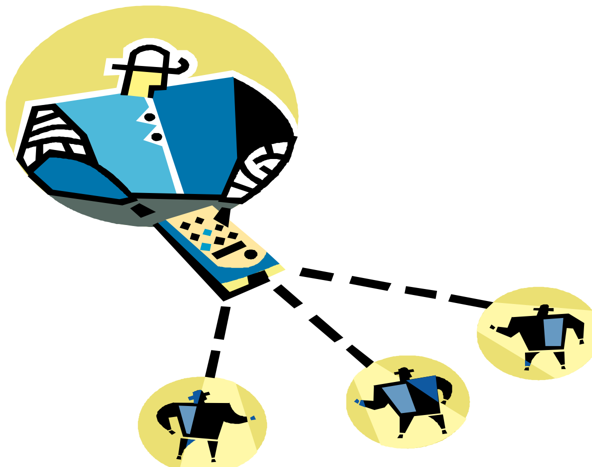
The CEO, as the association's chief spokesperson to staff, develops the organization's strategy and oversees its ability to execute that strategy. Employees cannot rally behind a leader who sits behind closed doors. Communication from the CEO gives managers and supervisors something tangible to discuss at their levels of the organization.

The CEO should play to his or her strengths, and use multiple (formal and informal) channels to reiterate key messages. For some employees, the CEO's voice is more compelling, while others need the written word to support what they heard.

Communicating the vision—According to Shel Holtz, a communications consultant and principal of

Holtz Communication + Technology, the CEO plays a key communication role during times of change, ensuring that employees understand the big picture, the problems with the current situation, the benefits of the desired state, and why the desired state will result in a meaningful outcome. The CEO motivates employees, explains his or her vision using plain language; forget jargon that doesn't speak to employees.

Without the CEO's display of leadership, the success of any change effort is at risk. Holtz reminds us that the CEO's effective communication of the big picture can overcome poor communication by managers and supervisors; however, good communication by managers and supervisors rarely will overcome poor communication from the CEO. If the frontline managers/supervisors lack communication skills, the CEO's vision of where the change will lead the organization can still inspire employees to make the change work. Employees need context for the change; they need to know that the required investment will result in something meaningful.



Communicating change comes down to this concept: "We are here, and it is not good. We need to get from here to there in order for things to be good again."

Forms of communication: Face-to-face is powerful

Face-to-face communication is the most powerful form of communication. It incorporates nonverbal communication characteristics such as body language, tone of voice, and facial expression. However, delivering the message is just one part of communication. According to Holtz, most CEOs have not mastered the art of listening to the feedback from those who are receiving their message.

Informal, small group settings humanize the CEO. Speak candidly and find a way to engage dialog. Set up employee breakfasts or brown bag lunches, wander around the office to chat with employees, show up at department and staff team meetings to find out what challenges employees face in implementing change or conducting their work. Employees are more likely to rally around someone they perceive as understanding their needs and their work rather than someone they see on occasion.

In more formal settings, such as monthly staff meetings, the CEO can host a forum for employee questions or an expression of ideas. The more comfortable the CEO is walking among his or her employees, the more the CEO is perceived as a leader. Employ interactive technologies (examples: Intranets, electronic mailing lists, blogs) to keep the dialog going between meetings. Constantly look for ways to reinforce your message. Publicly recognize employees who embrace change, and display the behavior you want to nurture. Regularly report progress on change initiatives and celebrate milestones.

Overcoming employee resistance to change

Whether your association is implementing new policies, procedures, programs, or going through a major realignment, it is (or should be) constantly responding to the changing demands in your environment, and capitalizing on new opportunities. The key to successful change lies in understanding the impact of change on employees and other stakeholders.

One-half to two-thirds of all major corporate change programs fail. According to Fortune *500* executives, the primary reason for this failure is resistance. People resist change for a number of reasons, including: 1) self-interest; 2) fear of the unknown; 3) conscientious objection or differing perceptions; 4) suspicion (that trust issue); and 5) conservatism caused from being out of touch, slowness of decision-making, and so on.

According to Holtz, to overcome resistance to change, the following must be in place:

1. Give stakeholders a compelling reason to change, and the change must be perceived by these stakeholders as a benefit to them.
2. Assure employees they will receive assistance in developing new skills, which will help alleviate doubt in their ability to change.

3. Those in authority must give employees permission to change, and the corporate culture must be conducive to that change.

To help overcome resistance, the CEO should acknowledge that resistance.

Here are some ideas for combating the reasons for resistance:

1. **Self-interest**—Employees are threatened by change that erodes status or power achieved through the old system. The CEO should communicate opportunities for employees to share in the success of the desired state.
2. **Fear of the unknown**—Employees may be uncertain about their abilities to take on new roles, learn new skills. Explain why the status quo is even scarier than embarking on change.
3. **Conscientious objection, differing perceptions—**It is unreasonable to think all employees will agree with every decision. Give employees the opportunity to express their objections; seriously listen to what they have to say. It creates a perception that management cares about what employees think.
4. **Suspicion—**The more visible, candid, plain-spoken the CEO, the more he or she will overcome the lack of trust.
5. **Conservatism**—Again, explain why business as usual will not cut it. Introduce employees to members and customers who are demanding change in the organization.

Communication cascades: The role of managers and supervisors

Frontline supervisors and managers play an important role implementing change initiatives. Failure to get a message to penetrate the organization usually happens at middle-management levels. This is understandable, as most managers and supervisors are not trained to communicate; they were not promoted into management positions because of their managerial or communication skills. The CEO must make this communication part of managers' day-to-day management role.

Holtz suggests, as the first phase of the communication cascade, the CEO facilitate a face-to-face meeting with managers, explaining the objectives and desired outcomes of the initiative, then routinely following it up with other forms of communication to keep the change initiative on track. The CEO helps translate these objectives into actionable communications by department managers and team leaders, who will implement change at the level where actual work gets done. Equally important, the CEO makes his management team accountable for implementation efforts.

The next step in the cascade is to have department managers translate organizational objectives into department/team objectives and communicate those objectives until frontline employees know how they will contribute to the initiative's success.

Common CEO communication mistakes

According to Holtz, there are some common communication mistakes CEOs should avoid:

1. **Generic, meaningless messages**—CEOs who communicate infrequently, addressing employees once a month or once a quarter, often cover too much ground, they often use jargon that is meaningless to employees.
2. **All good news**—Many executives believe employees are incapable of absorbing bad news. However, employees have already heard the news through the grapevine, along with a healthy dose of misinformation. They may as well hear it from their leader, to offer his or her vision of how the company will address the situation and the role he or she hopes employees will play in the turnaround or change.
3. **Excessive filters**—Often CEOs put too many filters in place to avoid addressing employees' tough questions. If you're going to solicit questions from employees, deal with all of them, even those that can't be answered.
4. **Can't get behind the vision thing**—Does the whole vision thing seem a bit touchy-feely? Experts say the CEO's number one job is to communicate the vision … nonstop, with passion. Why don't CEOs do a good job articulating a vision? Holtz says, these CEOs are insulated mentally (they embrace the bureaucrat part of the job), insulated physically (they do not connect with frontline employees and customers), or they don't actually have a vision.

CEOs—and managers—must keep employee communication top of mind. Good employee communication works to build an environment of trust, an important factor in engaging employees in the organization's success during times of change.

Writing President's Columns: What Editors Would Like to Tell Their New Presidents

By Joyce Hastings, Communications Director, State Bar of Wisconsin (ABA Bar Leadership Institute, Chicago, Ill.)

The year-long conversation

Think of the president's page as a year-long, ongoing "conversation" between the president and the individual members of your bar. It's a privilege and a responsibility, a unique opportunity that few others will ever have. Approach your column as if you are having a personal conversation with a friend over a cup of coffee.

Two primary purposes of your column

1. *Support, advance, cultivate a relationship with members*. Your members don't have a relationship with the organization, they have a relationship with the people in the organization.
2. *Educate and inform*. You can use your column to reinforce your focus or goals, but find a way to connect these activities to the Bar's strategic direction or long-term goals. Make sure your message is aligned with the organization's policies, its desired culture. This is a discussion you should have with your executive director.

Rethink

- disbanding the column for your year as president (good try!);
- giving away your columns to guests; or
- using the column to carry a personal agenda, an agenda that contradicts organizational policy or direction.

Remember

- *Your audience extends beyond your membership*. Our publications are archived in law libraries around the world, available online, and often read and cited by the public, media, our court, and future members of your association.
- Do you think Harriet Miers imagined her columns would be scrutinized by the U.S. Senate, Library of Congress, the American Bar Association, and the media 20 years later? These columns gave the public a glimpse of who she was and what was important to her at that time.

Hit the road running: Getting started

- Start thinking early! Collect ideas for articles while you are president-elect.
- Know your support team—your executive director, and your public relations and communications/editorial professionals—and use them as your sounding board, a resource.
- Review at least two years of previously written president's pages to understand what the organization has been communicating to its members.
- Kick off your year with an interview written about you by a professional writer, coordinated by your communications professional. A profile lays the groundwork for your columns, helps your members understand who you are, why you ran for office/became a lawyer, what issues are important to you, and so on.
- Get a current, professional photo taken. Take a couple of hours and shoot a variety of photos that could be used throughout your year to add variety, visual interest to your columns. You'll need a standard portrait for media opportunities, too.
- Identify a peer reviewer or two to give you honest feedback before submitting your articles … pick people who are not afraid to tell you what you need to hear.

Coming up with ideas, choosing topics

- **Draw upon personal experiences**. Write about what you know; write what you care about.
- **Ask your ED, PR/editorial staff for ideas**. They are aware of organizational, political,

legislative, editorial developments. Is there an issue before the board of governors, an upcoming event, an organizational initiative on professionalism/ethics/pro bono, an issue impacting the administration of justice that might make good column topics?

- **Ask the editor for a list of theme issues or feature stories for the coming months;** perhaps there's a topic that hits home for you (example: A feature story on lampooning lawyers/ the culture behind lawyer jokes may be a good topic to share your personal observations).
- **Review at least the last 12 months of your magazine,** newsletters, and other official publications. Jot down ideas that come to mind … from judicial independence to election campaign financing to trends in the profession. Is there a way to tie these to current events? Has the ABA president issued a statement on a topic you or the organization has an interest in?
- **Look to other publications for ideas.** Read columns written by other state bar association presidents, many of which are archived on their websites.
- **Read legal news articles online in the newspapers; subscribe to daily legal news feeds to stay on top of local and national legal news.** An interesting case or a national study could serve as inspiration.
- **Read about trends in the profession** (Altman Weil, law firm management consultants, is a good source). Altman Weil's most recent e-newsletter talked about trends in the profession and the profession's economic outlook. Each trend is a possible topic of discussion, particularly if your association is addressing these issues—law firm growth, increased competition, client service challenges, pricing issues, the war on talent.
- **Turn to the ABA.** The ABA's website includes a variety of resources, including issue summaries, presidential statements on a variety of topics, and research on issues impacting the profession. According to Deborah Wexel of the ABA's Media Relations Department, the ABA has developed message platforms on at least a dozen issues, such as a fair an impartial judiciary.
- **Don't miss the opportunity to recognize your volunteers.**
- **Think about the impact of political, ideological topics.** If you're a mandatory bar, you know about *Keller* and its impact on the association. If you're addressing a divisive issue, challenge your members to engage in the dialog in a meaningful way.

What makes an effective column?

1. Write what you know; write what you care about

- A Reno, Nevada, editor states that the best column a recent president wrote for her publication—and the one that received the most response—was about a racial event this president witnessed in downtown Reno. His shock and dismay came through his writing.
- One of the most effective columns I've read was a former president's experience battling depression. Gary Bakke talked about hatching his suicide plan, disguising it as an accident. He was a jogger, and he found the perfect opportunity … a dark, rainy night to slip and fall in front of an oncoming truck. He used this column to educate and encourage those suffering from depression to seek help. *That column was reprinted in many bar journals across the country.*

2. Make it personal, invite participation.

- Weave personal experience (family, work, pleasure, community service) through columns as a way to discuss issues. This makes the president appear more "human" and less a figurehead, a title. This approach can cultivate a relationship with your members. Former SBW president Michelle Behnke does this well. In her columns, she lays out the issues, giving her opinions while acknowledging other perspectives. And, she ends with a call for civil debate and solutions based on knowledge. She is solution-oriented; you get a sense of who she is as a person and what she values. She's likeable, respectful.
- Find a way to use the column to listen (rather than to preach); it's more effective in building the relationship between members and the association. Think about using technology as a way to extend the dialog (e-lists, email, blogs, etc.).

3. Entertain; tell a story; weave a theme (for the talented only!)

- I have to think back to more than 20 years to find Don Heaney, an old pipe-smoking gentleman with a quick wit. He knew how to tell a story. He wove a reoccurring theme—"a fireside chat"—throughout his year. He would ponder a quandary or read his evening paper before a crackling fire in his study. After several months of this recurring theme, you felt you knew the man, could describe his pipe and smell his favorite tobacco, visualize his scuffed-toe slippers, and enjoy the warmth of his fireplace. He was creative, personable.
- Don knew how to write an intriguing headline: "On leveling mountains, drying up oceans, and removing glaciers." He set his article up with a riddle with a surprise end. He drew in readers, held their attention.
- One of his columns carries an unexpected title, "Donnie does Milwaukee," and an opening sentence: "Sometimes I think I'm just an old graveyard ghost." *How can you not read on?*

4. Getting off on the right foot with your editor

A. *Understand the editor's motivation.* Without question, bar association editors have three objectives:

- First and foremost, we want you to look good (that's what we're paid to do!);
- We want the publication's content to be relevant to our readers (without this value, there's no readership); and
- We want to produce a well-edited publication that gets out on deadline (this impacts our credibility—keeps our bosses, readers, advertisers, and you happy).

B. *What should you expect from your editor (and your team—the ED, PR, communications)?*

- Professionals who give good advice, help you avoid problems (like political landmines) before they occur;
- An understanding of internal and external politics of the organization (if you are writing on particularly sensitive, divisive issues—seek advice about the message);
- A source for ideas—they are often the first to hear that the court has scheduled a hearing on a matter impacting the profession, etc.;
- Help when you get hung up—help with ideas or refining a rough draft;
- Honest feedback— that is, as long as you're receptive to it; and
- Someone who is creative and flexible.

C. *What do we, as editor, expect from our presidents?*

- The courtesy of meeting our deadlines—this is the number one issue for editors. Publication press dates are timed to deliver advertising, and notices of court hearings, seminars, and other events;
- Advance notice if you need column ideas, help with statistics, and talking points for unfamiliar topics;
- To write your own columns; ask for help when you need it; and
- When you say you want open, honest feedback, you mean it.

D. Have a conversation.

A couple months in advance of the deadline for your first column, meet with your staff editor/communications professional (probably a good idea to include the ED, PR person, too, to get everyone on the same page). Discuss column ideas, deadlines, length, and the internal review/editing process and other mechanics.

- *How do you feel about being edited?* If you are particular, be upfront about it; work out a process that allows the editor to do what he or she is trained to do, while giving you the satisfaction of a final review, if that's what you need.
- Every editor can cite an example of a president who said, "I want it right; fix what needs fixing," only to face an unhappy president who really liked that lengthy paragraph composed of one long run-on sentence. (There are times, we are tempted to stamp "Dictated but not read" on the bottom of these columns.)
- Every publication adopts a style guide to ensure editorial consistency throughout. We can engage in comical exchanges about capitalization and punctuation, but that's not how we want to spend out time.
- *Understand the process for internal vetting—it will be unique to your bar's culture and work style.* In Wisconsin, we typically have the president work with a staff subject-matter expert if the president is writing on an unfa-

miliar topic. Then, when the president submits his or her column at deadline, editorial will circulate the column internally as an FYI to the ED and department heads. This allows us to catch any factual, tone, currency, or message issues. (Personal essays won't require the same review that issue-oriented or political columns will.)

- *Share your column ideas in advance.* Doing so will give staff a chance to make you aware of recent developments that might suggest the timing is not right for the topic. It allows us to make editorial connections in the issue that you may be unaware of. It may even prevent the ED from writing on the same topic (or at least allows each to take different perspectives, if the topic warrants that level of discussion).

5. Keep it short, stick to your word count

Keep it to one page or less. Most readers will not follow an article's jump to another page. This also helps the editor, who has probably allocated a certain amount of space to your column, and an editor can't add "just one more page" to the issue without incurring substantial costs. (Adding one page really means adding a total of four.) If you on occasion need more than one page, an editor generally can accommodate the request if they have advance notice.

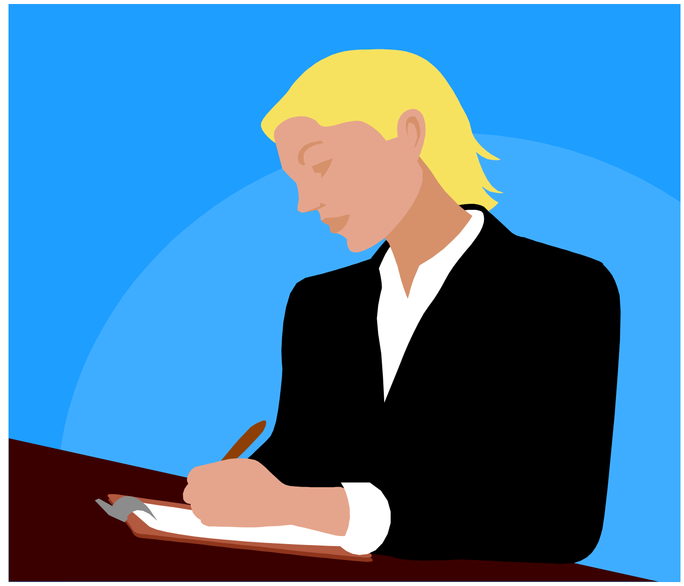
6. You are not writing a brief; pay attention to your headline, and opening and closing paragraphs.

Readers are scanners; think about your reading habits. If you haven't captured them with the headline, they'll most likely move on (editors can be a good source for headlines). If you're lucky to get readers to the first paragraph, it better be good. Typically, they will scan the intro and move to the conclusion. Make sure you've hit your message hard in those two places.

Other ways to pull readers into column include use of subheads as entry points for skimmers or pull quotes (but the quotes must be intriguing) to engage readers.

Other writing tips

- **Got writer's block?** One editor advises presidents facing writer's block to use the "vomit approach." Just start spewing and pretty soon the thoughts will begin to flow. If you do that better dictating, do it that way. *Caveat*: Don't try to write your column after you've finished writing a brief. Do a warm-up first. Write a letter to a family member to make the switch to your real voice. Write your introductory paragraph and your conclusion first. Fill in the rest of the paragraphs to tie the two together.



- **Have a couple columns in your hip pocket.** Your year as president will be a busy year, and unexpected matters requiring your attention will certainly come up. The deadline for the president's column always arrives sooner than planned. Do yourself a favor. Draft a couple columns before you become president but be prepared to scrap them for more timely content.
- **Write your column, and then sit on it.** Work on your column well in advance of the deadline. After you draft your column, set your work aside. Revisit it with a fresh eye several days later; revise it as needed, then share it with your peer reviewer(s) before sending it to the editor. You may go through several edits; it's worth the effort. But…
- **Don't get hung up on perfection**. It's better to get a rough draft to your editor before the deadline, and work collaboratively to edit and refine it. Editors are there to make good (or not so good) writing better.

**This presentation was prepared with helpful suggestions from Christine Cendagorta, Washoe County Bar Association; René Eichem, Kansas Bar Association; and members of the NABE Communications Section.*

NABE's Mid-Year Meeting "Kicked-off" with Motivational Pep Rally

Motivational speaker Terry Bowden, ABC Sports Commentator and Former NCAA Football Coach
Summarized by Tasha Henderson, Associate Executive Director, Arkansas Bar Association

The 2008 NABE Mid-year Meeting in Los Angeles, California, kicked off with a plenary session featuring ABC Sports commentator and former NCAA football coach Terry Bowden. Coach Bowden's high-energy presentation, "Motivating the Benchwarmers," gave helpful tips for Bar Executives to use when coaching their staffs to be winning teams. He began by stressing that we, as Bar Executives, need to learn to "do what wins the game and inspires other employees." He advised the audience to "Build a Champion" by making staff members feel they are doing something that is going to make a difference to their association.

Coach Bowden gave the audience a four-question approach to remember when building champions.

1. **Do you want to be the best?**
   He stressed how everyone needs to find their passion and be willing to pay the price to make his or her bar association the best.
2. **Are you willing to pay the price?**
   A highlight from this segment was a story he shared about when he was a graduate assistant for the Florida State football team. His dad, Bobby Bowden, was head coach. They had a staff meeting every morning before practice. Terry would be the first person there each morning and would make the coffee. It became a competition within himself to beat everyone there in the morning just so he could make the coffee. He said he knew it was worth it because every day he did it, his dad would have a cup of coffee, take a sip, sit back in his chair and say "Now that's good coffee." Coach Bowden said he was willing to pay the price, to go the distance, and prove he was dedicated to coaching by being the first person there every morning to make the coffee.
3. **Can you work together as a team?**
   He wanted us to ask ourselves, "Do we have the willingness to change to help our bar association to succeed? Does our staff have the willingness to change?" His inspiring words encouraged the audience to build a better team of their staff and to push them to succeed in their goals.
4. **Will you take responsibility?**
   He encouraged the audience to reflect on their management skills by asking "but for our effort would this have happened?" He stressed that every staff member needed to believe that the thing they do for the association is the one thing that makes the association successful.

After Coach Bowden's inspiring and motivating session, audience members waited in line to shake hands, ask questions, and get autographs from him. A few members stopped and shared their thoughts. Allan Head, Executive Director of the North Carolina Bar Association said he and his staff "were going to go back and implement Coach Bowden's four-question approach." When asked what he learned from the program, Mr. Head said, "being a successful leader is more than drawing plays in the sand." Jeffrey Alderman, Executive Director of the Kansas State Bar Association said he wants to take back to his staff, "the excitement of making coffee and that there should be passion in what you do."

I had the opportunity to sit and chat with Coach Bowden after the crowd had dispersed to break. I asked him to pick out the one piece of advice that he would like to leave with NABE and he simply stated, "Have a plan."

Develop and Deliver Winning Presentations

By Francine Walker, Director of Public Information & Bar Services, The Florida Bar

Presentation skills can make the difference between reaching the top and staying there or being shown the door. Designed for bar executives and senior management professionals, one NABE midyear meeting session, "Develop and Deliver Winning Presentations," offered practical guidance on how to read the audience and self-correct, adapt to changing circumstances and bring a large crowd to attention.

A distinguished panel of NABE members shared their many years of experience developing and delivering top-notch presentations. Their advice ranged from strategies for content development to tips on personal delivery techniques.

Moderator Mark Tarasiewicz, Director of Communications for the Philadelphia Bar Association, did an excellent job of posing and fielding questions for panelists Valerie Brown, Legislative Counsel for New Jersey State Bar Association, Bonnie Sashin, APR, Communications Director for Boston Bar Association, and Allan B. Head, Executive Director of North Carolina Bar Association.

Some of the tips for effective presentations shared by the panel members were:

- Seek answers to logistical questions first, i.e., what is the day/time and circumstances of the presentation? What are the demographics of the audience? Who else is speaking? What is the purpose of the presentation (to inform, to persuade, etc.)? How do I want to be perceived and how do I want my organization to be perceived by the audience? What examples and analogies could I use to make the presentation relevant to the audience?
- Know your audience, not just your subject. Set the audience's expectation for your presentation at the opening and then fulfill it. Tell them what you're going to do and then do it!
- Practice, even if your presentation is only five minutes long, helps relieve anxiety and increases your comfort with the presentation. Practice as if you are having a friendly conversation with the people in the audience. Consider eye contact and physical gestures during practice sessions too. "Body language speaks volumes," according to Brown. She cautioned that gestures need to be both purposeful and appropriate.

- Engage all sides of the room. When answering questions, begin by making eye contact with the person who asked, and then make contact with others throughout the room.
- Use gender neutral language. Re-word he/she and his/hers, and consider all terms that may be gender-specific when preparing for the talk.
- The call to order should be made by someone other than the speaker, especially someone with a resonant voice and demeanor.
- The use of humor is generally a risk unworthy of the gain unless it comes naturally to the presenter. Never tell off-color, sexist or culturally based jokes.
- Manage your time. Don't expect the moderator or someone else to do it for you.
- Turn off your cell phone, check audio and visual equipment and don't try to impress your audience with technology.

The panel also discussed the "use and abuse" of Power Point. Their sage advice included:

- technology should enhance the content but not be the content;
- be prepared to react to equipment failure and continue your presentation without visuals;
- employ only a few, not all, of the graphics options and use appropriate graphics and charts;
- proof, proof, and re-proof the slides—typos discredit the presenter;
- white type on a dark background is easiest for the audience to read;
- limit each slide to two or three bullet points.

Handouts from the presentation are available on the NABE website: www.nabenet.org.

The Seven Deadly Survey Sins and How to Avoid Them

Presenter Brian Koma, Vice-President, Research and Design, Vovici, Dulles, Va.
Summarized by Pat Yevics, Director of Law Office Management, Maryland State Bar Association

The purpose of "The Seven Deadly Survey Sins and How to Avoid Them" session was to teach bar associations how to:

- Determine what information the association wanted to obtain
- Write questions to get that information
- Determine who to survey
- Distribute the survey
- Use the data

The audience was quite varied, as is often the case at NABE breakout sessions. There were local bar executive directors, marketing and communication directors, as well as a few bar presidents.

Although the presenter had submitted materials which were provided to attendees on the NABE website prior to the session, he used a different and more detailed presentation the day of the program. These materials can be viewed on NABE's website, www.nabenet.org.

The speaker did an excellent job of presenting information for the NABE audience. His company, Vovici, works with many companies, large and small, to help create and distribute surveys, and analyze survey results.

Although he spoke about on-line surveys, almost all of his tips were appropriate for either on-line or paper surveys. Many of his tips can be used with focus groups.

The approach he took was to show what NOT to do in creating and distributing a survey. After telling a horror story for each tip, he offered practical and concrete suggestions on what TO DO when writing surveys. Even if a bar association does not take on the project of a full blown survey, many of his suggestions can be used in such tasks as evaluating speakers and/or seminars.

As the speaker went through the seven deadly sins, it was obvious from the nodding heads in the audience that many were guilty of committing these errors. The speaker gave simple examples for avoiding these problems.

The seven deadly sins are: (To see how to avoid the seven deadly sins visit the NABE website to read the materials)

1. Many questions are written in such a way as to have a bias by leading to a particular response. Many questions are also confusing and can have more than one answer.
2. Most surveys are simply too long and the questions too complicated.
3. Many survey writers assume that just because they write the survey, that everyone will want to take it or even care about taking it.
4. Make certain you send e-surveys to people who expect to get it such as your members. Be careful if sending to non-members.
5. What data do you want to capture, and what will you do with the information?
6. Often reports about the data are confusing and will not be read or used.
7. Very often when the data is collected it is only used for the original purpose instead of throughout the organization.

The presenter used interesting and amusing examples of what not to do and how to use a survey to improve service to our members. Most in the audience found the information extremely helpful and asked thoughtful questions. This was a well-attended and useful session. I will use many of the suggestions when asking questions of our members.

Interested in being on the NABE Communications Section Executive Council? If you'd like to throw your hat into the ring, watch the NABECOMM discussion group for an announcement in the next month or two.

A Great Buffet

By Duane D. Stanley, Assistant Executive Director, Hennepin County Bar Association

Promise me I'll accomplish 90 minutes of work in 60 minutes and you have at least caught my attention. For me, like Charlie Brown facing Lucy with that football, hopes springs eternal. Such was the case in L.A. when Daniel Siegel reprised a presentation — *The Less-Paper Office: How to Do 90 Minutes of Work in 60 Minutes* — he had offered at the Communication Section's workshop last fall in Philly. While I cannot claim to be working 50-percent more productively following Siegel's presentation, I both enjoyed and benefitted from this session. The fact that it had been recommended for the L.A. Mid-year because of the positive response at the workshop suggested the presentation would prove worthwhile; it did.

Much, but not nearly all, of the value can be gleaned from Siegel's handouts that are now available at www.abanet.org/nabe/events/08midyearhandouts.html.

Though over-reaching in his claim: "Managing technology, paper, and *your time* is easy," Sigel provided practical and easy-to-apply ideas, all focused on harnessing the power of technology. Ideas fell into two brackets, which, while closely related, do not require the novice to fully buy into the "scan everything" approach. He made a great case for a PDF-work style, but he also provided a 30-tech-ideas-in-20-minutes-type smorgasbord aimed at efficiencies in the normal tasks of daily work. To gain efficiencies, he admonished, you don't usually have to buy new things as much as you need to set up some new patterns, and you need to *actually learn how to use the software you already have*.

While Siegel admits that a truly paper-less office is only a pipe dream, he directs the inquirer to move toward a less-paper office. Key tools are already probably in your office: a CD burner, scanner (preferably a sheet fed one), TIF and PDF viewer, and PDF software. (Don't get caught thinking viewers are an inexpensive form of PDF software.) He points out that most new copiers serve as high-speed, sheet fed scanners. There are various free viewers and PDF software programs and a choice of inexpensive programs, but Siegel strongly recommends biting the bullet and purchasing Adobe's Acrobat full version, not the free Adobe Reader, because you will want the PDF search capabilities, OCR scanning, and indexing capabilities.

Noting that few of us have actually been trained on the software we use, Siegel took a rapid-fire approach to demonstrate ways to get more out of our most common software programs, specifically Windows, Microsoft Word, Internet Explorer, and Outlook. Unfortunately, his handout doesn't detail the techniques for such tweaking, which were like great steaks at a buffet. Approaches I have incorporated in Outlook: adjust the view in reading e-mail so that fewer need to be opened; increase use of sub-files for sorting, and increase use of sorting and sifting rules. In Word, I have customized my toolbars with a range of one-click icons, including editorial tools like word-count and change-tracking. I eliminated the button for e-mailing (that converts the document into text within the e-mail) and replaced it with a button to send the document as an attachment in e-mail. For the desktop I switched to a left-side toolbar, and increased use of Windows Explorer and right mouse button clicking to perform functions.

At a smorgasbord or buffet, you don't plan to eat everything; some things you may not like at all. But there is usually plenty of good stuff to enjoy and be satisfied. And among those many choices, it is great fun to find some carefully prepared steak. I did.