

Association-Section Relations

When CSEs were asked to contribute one question they'd like answered regarding the association-section relationship, they responded:

General

Only ONE question??!!

Maybe something along the lines of "how do you determine/negotiate the proper 'leash' for your sections?" In other words, how do you control them without them thinking you are controlling them? Is it through rules and bylaws, a conversation, memos, etc.? What works, given the unique histories and cultures of various bars. If you want to change the arrangement, how does one best go about such a conversion?

Which is the dog and which is the tail? Depending on which I talk to (the Board or the Section leadership) the answers differ...

The biggest challenge is getting volunteers to do what we would like them to do. In broad strokes, the question would be how do you get volunteers to follow established procedures? An obvious specific example is how do we get volunteers to submit program materials in a timely fashion? We have turned cajoling into an art form!

What are some "good or best practices" for association-section relations?

What are the best ways to revive a "dead" section?

Oh, there are so many questions -- like, "why do we have sections?" "Do we really need them?" -- but I think I'll go with this one -- "How can sections cooperate with the bar association rather than compete with it?"

In what manner and to what extent do bar directors intercede when there are problems with Section Chairs? Lack of participation, etc.

To what extent, in dollars (including overhead, etc.), does your Association annually subsidize section activity? Is it worth it?

Governance/Oversight

How to develop a governance structure that balances accountability with flexibility so that sections can be creative and responsive to members yet accountable to the bar association?

They can spend money, but there's little accountability. How does one tighten this stuff up?

Association-Section Relations

Governance/Oversight, continued

How can a bar insure that Sections stay on the reservation when they testify/lobby in the legislature? Or for some bars, should Sections be allowed to testify at all? If so, what are the safeguards and procedures?

How does the Bar prevent a Section officer from pushing personal or Section positions that have not become Bar positions?

How do we develop active leadership, future leadership?

Finances

What is the optimal financial arrangement between the association and its sections?

The 50/50 split question: Should sections be allowed to keep their financial accounts, be allowed to accumulate surpluses year to year or does their funding revert back to the General Fund at the end of each year?

Should we let them have their own budget? (ours don't, but they keep asking...)

If you let sections roll their financial balances (\$dues), can you ever get the money out for bar projects, or change the policy so that balances revert to the association? What happens if they run a deficit?

The positives and negatives of sections having their own budgets. And on a related note, how the issue of sections wanting to have free educational programs work when the bar sells CLE programs.

Staffing

What role should staff play? The issue we see is a staff person being available to send out meeting notices and coordinate food only is a good thing but it doesn't always provide the info that would or could connect the sections to each other and to the Bar. How do you help ensure that the sections are truly a part of the Bar and not just an independent body? Working towards the greater whole certainly seems like it would make sense, huh? But how do you effectively do that?

Meetings

How can the bar (state or local) build on the specialization of sections and their meetings to creatively replace or augment the bar's annual meeting.

And finally ...

Does having quasi-independent sections mean that the State Bar is an association or a confederation?

How can we keep those sections from practicing cannibalism, polygamy and necrophilia? I mean, all of these things cause us management difficulties.