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Strategic Errors in Bar Association IT
NABE Midyear Meeting
February 8, 2006
1:45 pm – 2:45 pm
Columbus Hall A/B

“For a list of all the ways technology has failed to improve the quality of life, please press three.” ~Alice Kahn

- ☐ Technology for the sake of technology, not integrating the use of technology into a vision for the association and how it fulfills its mission of serving members and the community.
 - ? Are our technology priorities aligned with our spending priorities?
 - ? Are our technology priorities aligned with our programmatic priorities?
 - ? Are programmatic priorities, technology and financial plans integrated into the budget process?
 - ? What do we want to be able to do with our database? What kind of conference calls do we hold?

“Treat your password like your toothbrush. Don't let anybody else use it, and get a new one every six months.” ~ Clifford Stoll

- ☐ Security as an after thought. Buy the best. Lack of training in security issues.
 - ? What do we need to be secure?
 - ? What are we doing to educate our staff about security (adware, viruses, downloadable files, changing our passwords)?

“640K ought to be enough for anybody.” ~ Bill Gates, 1981

- ☐ No technology budget until it is time to replace those 386s; then, we dip into reserves to pay for the new machines. **There are bar associations running DOS programs.**
 - ? When will we need to upgrade? What is on the horizon for servers, operating systems and program software? Telephones? Video conferencing? MP3?

- ? What are our vendors using (accountant, printer)? What are their plans for upgrading?
- ? What are members using?

☞ Everybody in the office gets the same software and hardware; it is only fair. Are we holding our staff accountable for their acumen and facility with technology?

- ? Who needs what in order to do their job? Is everybody—generally speaking—running the same versions? (There are exceptions.)

“When computers (people) are networked, their power multiplies geometrically. Not only can people share all that information inside their machines, but they can reach out and instantly tap the power of other machines (people), essentially making the entire network their computer.” ~ Peter Drucker ~ Scott McNeely.

☞ Not understanding our members and how they use technology. There are multiple delivery systems there isn't one right way to deliver knowledge to our members.

- ? Are we asking our members what they are using in their offices? How are they using it? Do we know how they are managing technology?
- ? Are we confusing “information” with knowledge and value?
- ? Are we asking these questions often enough?
- ? Do we understand the differences among members and their use of technology?

“Leaders have to act more quickly today. The pressure comes much faster.” ~ Andy Grove

☞ Cumbersome decision making regarding technology and much, but not everything else for that matter). There is a balance between being an early adapter (Betamax anyone?) and viewing the Internet as a passing fancy. Read about this stuff or hire somebody who does and keeps you and the board informed in plain English.

- ? Are we planning to decide? Are we being held captive by the early-adapter gadget geek gurus?
- ? Are we asking the right questions?

“The Internet is like a giant jellyfish. You can't step on it. You can't go around it. You've got to get through it.” ~ John Evans

- ☞ Taking technology for granted. It is like a garden, it needs attention.
 - ? Do we discuss this at staff meetings?
 - ? Do we discuss this as part of strategic planning process with the board? How about our committees and sections?
 - ? Is it part of project planning?

“I used to think that cyberspace was fifty years away. What I thought was fifty years away, was only ten years away. And what I thought was ten years away... it was already here. I just wasn't aware of it yet.” ~ Bruce Sterling

- ☞ Being behind the curve relative to your members. Younger members in particular want the association to be as sophisticated and savvy as they are.
 - ? What's on the horizon? What are our 14 year old kids excited about? What are the law students buzzing about?
 - ? What are the legal tech blogs talking about? Who can we ask?

“Technology is so much fun but we can drown in our technology. The fog of information can drive out knowledge.” ~ Daniel J. Boorstin

- ☞ Remember the paperless office? There is still a place for old-fashioned printed paper—at least for now—even among our younger members. Don't think only in terms of cost savings when evaluating communications vehicles.
 - ? Are we differentiating among delivery systems?
 - ? Are we thinking about options and choices?

“At some point, we must have faith in the intelligence of the end user.” ~ Anonymous

- ☞ No realizing that members are exposed to great Web sites all of the time. Members may not have expected your print publication to look like *Fortune Magazine* but they do think that you Web site should be up to date and be reasonably sophisticated. Treating technology as an end rather than a means to a more important goal.
 - ? Why are we doing this?
 - ? What is the purpose of our Web site?
 - ? Are we asking our members about our Web site?

“It may not always be profitable at first for businesses to be online, but it is certainly going to be unprofitable not to be online.” ~ Esther Dyson

- ☒ No integrated coordination between the technology priorities and membership priorities.
 - ? Are we setting realistic goals for ROI?

- ☒ Web brand as distinct from other association branding initiatives for products and services.
 - ? Are we integrating our approaches?

“The technology at the leading edge changes so rapidly that you have to keep current after you get out of school. I think probably the most important thing is having good fundamentals.” ~ Gordon Moore

- ☒ No money or time for training. Thank you for upgrading all that software and adding more functionality that I don't have time to figure out how to use.
 - ? Are we investing in staff training both through formal and informal mechanisms? Are we encouraging sharing tips and ideas about our technology? Are we giving folks permission to play with the software to see what it does?

- ☒ Staffing for technology is minimal or non-existent.

“In a few hundred years, when the history of our time will be written from a long-term perspective, it is likely that the most important event historians will see is not technology, not the Internet, not e-commerce. It is an unprecedented change in the human condition. For the first time - literally - substantial and rapidly growing numbers of people have choices. For the first time, they will have to manage themselves. And society is totally unprepared for it.” ~ Peter Drucker

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