

# NABE-News

OF BAR EXECUTIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005



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## CALENDAR

from [www.nabenet.org](http://www.nabenet.org)

### NABE Administration and Finance Section Meeting

When: Feb. 7 - 8

Where: Salt Lake City, UT

### NABE/NCBP/NCBF Midyear Meeting

When: Feb. 8-12

Where: Salt Lake City, UT

### CSE Retreat

When: March 8 - 9, 2005

Where: Chicago, IL

### Bar Leadership Institute

When: March 10 -12, 2005

Where: Chicago, IL

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**WELCOME BACK:** I hope each of you had a wonderful time over the holidays and are now re-energized for another year. (Picture a pink rabbit beating a drum. . .)

If you need to recharge your professional batteries and pick up some timely information and tips, it's not too late to register for the NABE Midyear Meeting, February 8-10, in Salt Lake City. You can view the full program at [www.nabenet.org](http://www.nabenet.org). The deadline for online registration is January 7 (yes, that's Friday) so "hop" to it! And don't forget the A&F Section Workshop on Tuesday, February 7, which will focus on human resources, administration, and budget/finances.

Although the Downtown Marriott is full, you can still be close to the convention center at the Hilton Salt Lake City Center.

**NEED TO IMPROVE YOUR WEBSITE?** Then submit your bar association's URL by January 12 for the web review at the Midyear Meeting. Former Luminary Award winners and other web experts will critique your bar's website and discuss their findings in private appointments on Wednesday, February 9. Send your bar's URL, along with any particular issues the web team should address, to Jill Werner at [wernerj@staff.abanet.org](mailto:wernerj@staff.abanet.org). The web reviews are by advance appointment only, so sign up now!

**WHO SAYS THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A FREE LUNCH?** Okay, it's not lunch, but the National Conference of Bar Foundations (NCBF) is inviting all NABE members who work with foundations to attend, free of charge, their Saturday programming at the Midyear Meeting. A highly recommended speaker, Laura Hansen Dean, will address the group on planned giving programs and provide updated information on IRS regulations affecting 501(c)(3) organizations. For more information on these programs, go to the NCBF website, [www.ncbf.org](http://www.ncbf.org).

**MORE (ALMOST) FREE THINGS:** January is the official beginning of NABE's half-price membership drive. All membership fees, **including section memberships**, are 50% off. This is a great opportunity for new staff members to get a taste of what NABE offers and make connections with their peers (joining a section is an excellent way to do that!)

**MATERIALS ARCHIVE:** A new feature has been added to the NABE website – an archive of prior meeting handout materials. Materials collected since the 2003 Seattle Midyear Meeting are available; just click on “past meetings” underneath the Salt Lake City program cover on the home page.

**BEST WISHES TO:** Patricia M. Martin, who is retiring from the Bucks County Bar Association. You will be missed, Pat, but we wish you happiness and health in your retirement. Heather Martin, who previously was Executive Director of The Baltimore County Bar Association, is succeeding Pat at the Bucks County Bar.

**SEVEN PRACTICES OF SUPER BOARDS:** (Adapted from an article by James E. Orlikoff, president of Orlikoff & Associates in Chicago, and printed by ASAE)

Following are some crucial things super boards do. Implementing one or two of these practices can result in a good board; implementing all seven results in an excellent one.

- 1) Embrace systems thinking – Systems thinking means that a board member places the interests of the association as a whole above those of any constituencies or subordinate institutions – even if the board member strongly identifies with one of them. Boards with representational governance can overcome this pitfall if board members have a mission focus and are trained in how to apply systems thinking.
- 2) Focus on the mission – Super boards have a relentless, laser-like focus on the mission. A simple exercise can demonstrate the extent to which your board is mission-focused. During a retreat or at the beginning of a board meeting, request, without prior notice, that each board member write the association’s mission in his or her own words on a blank sheet of paper. An effective board with an effective mission will demonstrate a consistent response, both internally among the board and compared with the formal mission. An ineffective board will demonstrate one of three other outcomes: a) everyone on the board says the mission is something different; b) many board members submit blank responses, not knowing what the mission is and not wanting to guess; or c) board members’ responses are roughly equally divided between two conflicting missions (the worst outcome). An effective board will have a knock-down, drag-out battle once every two years or so to test the mission, and to reaffirm or revise it.
- 3) Lead change – A super board spends a majority of its time deliberating and planning the future. The fundamental role of the board has changed to become one of creating the future through forward thinking, active planning and action. This requires boards to move away from a cumbersome decision-making process to a streamlined, rapid one. This transition is not easily made because boards, like the organizations they govern, traditionally resist change. Super boards control how they spend their single most precious commodity: their time together. Reviewing the past (monitoring) is reduced to no more than 25% of a board’s time; talking about and creating the future consume the other 75%.
- 4) Request good governance information – Super boards request information specific to identified strategic issues and current and predicted market conditions confronting their organizations. These boards make certain that the agenda information

*(continued)*

they receive frames big-picture issues and is policy-focused and future-oriented. Unfortunately, some boards do not receive governance information; instead, they are given voluminous management reports and tactical staff information.

- 5) Hold board members accountable to perform standards – A truly effective board creates a culture of performance and accountability. One of the ways it does this is by evaluating the performance of its members against pre-established criteria, which are both quantitative (e.g., minimum meeting attendance) and qualitative (e.g., thoughtfully contributing to board discussions, supporting board decisions and policy). Super boards do not automatically renew board members' terms, but consider each board member's performance, as well as his or her skills, characteristics and professional focus relative to the changing needs of the board.
- 6) Control governance structure – Super boards control their structures; ineffective boards are controlled by them. The structure of governance includes board size, numbers and types of board committees, and numbers and types of subsidiary or related boards. Often there is a lack of strategic alignment between the different governance entities within an association. Ineffective governance structure typically results in one of two polemical governance diseases (in the worst of all worlds, it can result in both): governance gridlock or governance conflict.
- 7) Use board job descriptions – The fundamental characteristic of excellent governance is that all board members have a shared understanding of the job of the board – its role, responsibilities, and relationships with management and other leaders. Super boards go one step further: they have a job description for the board chair. Super boards do not allow individuals to dictate the function or direction of the board or association, even if that individual is the board chair.

**“HEAD NOTE” OF THE WEEK:** A phone call from a member is not an interruption; it is another opportunity to serve.