

NABE-News

OF BAR EXECUTIVES

Thursday, May 19, 2005

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CALENDAR

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NABE/NCBP/NCBF

Annual Meeting

When: August 2-4, 2005

Where: Chicago, IL

NABE/NCBP/NCBF

NABE Communications

Section Workshop

When: September 28 -

October 1, 2005

Where: Orlando, Florida

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NABE ELECTION RESULTS: Ev Sullivan, Executive Director of the Lancaster (PA) Bar Association was elected Vice President, and Sue Lengal, Executive Director of the Akron Bar Association was elected Secretary. Congratulations to the two of you and thanks to all who ran for the NABE Board! We appreciate your interest in seeking a leadership role – now what about the rest of you??

CHECKLIST OF THINGS TO DO: Another item to add to the checklist from last week: Renew your NABE dues! So far, 369 of you (out of 564 notices that were mailed) have renewed for 2005-2006. A second dues notice was sent this week, and we'd like all of you to "re-up" by June 1, the start of NABE's new membership year.

NEW BLOG ANNOUNCED: Lincoln Mead and Toby Brown from the Utah State Bar are rolling out their brand-new bar blog called Barchives, which is dedicated to all things "bar". Blogs – online journal-type websites – are a fast-growing trend. Topic categories for this blog include the usual: CLE, finance, communications, etc. and a section on BarAlliance. (BarAlliance is the effort to create a consortium of bars to share a common membership management system.) Recent entries include posts on pro bono issues (from Toby's trip to the Equal Justice Conference) and Lincoln's review of the new book, "The Attorney's Guide to MS Office." Lincoln and Toby are looking for feedback, suggestions, and even "guest posts" from NABE members. Check out the new blog at www.barchives.org.

OFFER FROM ABA CAREER COUNSELING CENTER: The ABA Career Counseling Center is offering bar association members a limited-time special discount of \$30 off the public rate on ABA Resume Reviews. For each of your members who utilizes the service, the Center will return \$20 of the sale price to your bar association! The specially priced reviews are \$95 and are conducted by a Legal Career Counselor from the ABA Career Resource Center. The confidential assessment addresses five issues: visual presentation, accuracy, organization of information, persuasive quality, and overall presentation. Participants receive grades in each area. They also gain substantive comments and suggestions for upgrading their resumes' effectiveness. As a bonus, a career counselor will email revised resume to those submitting them electronically in .doc or .rtf format.

If you're interested, contact Jill Eckert McCall (312/988-6215 or careers@abanet.org) for your bar association's discount code. For additional information about the Career Counseling Center, go to www.abanet.org/careercounsel.

CONFERENCE CALL PROTOCOL: Volunteer leaders these days do not lack communication options. With technology developing and refining new methods every day, often your biggest challenge is choosing which form of communication is best for the task at hand – as opposed to conducting business via the mechanism (phone, fax, e-mail) that happens to be a personal favorite.

When time is of the essence, the conference call remains one of the best ways to convene a small group in between face-to-face meetings. Conducting an *effective* conference call requires old-fashioned thought and preparation. Regardless of how pressing the issue, it's as important to take the time to prepare for the discussion as it is to facilitate the process. By accomplishing both, a volunteer leader will earn appreciation and praise from members for using their time efficiently and well.

Preparation

- **Decide who's in on the call.** The first thing you need to consider is who should participate in the call. Think about including members who hold information relevant to the topic at hand. This may or may not include the obvious participants. You will also want to include key representatives from constituencies potentially affected by the outcomes resulting from the call.
- **Establish a clear set of desired outcomes.** Ask yourself these kinds of questions: Is this call necessary? Can the issue wait? If not, what needs to occur as a result of our discussion? How quickly? What will be the chief result?
- **Create and distribute an agenda.** All meetings, regardless of how they are convened, require an agenda. Don't try to cover too much ground. Keep the topic tightly focused, communicate your desired outcomes, and give each major agenda item a time limit. Cover minor items up front so that you may quickly move to items of substance. Conclude the agenda with next steps, which can be agreed upon at the conclusion of the call. Remember to include clear instructions about how to dial into the call when you send the agenda.

Facilitation

Remember that a conference call is a cross between a face-to-face meeting and a telephone conversation. You will therefore need to draw on a number of skills. For example, similar to a face-to-face meeting, greet participants as they "check in," and engage those who waiting for the quorum in small talk. Hold logistical and substantive topics until everyone is on line.

- **Designate a timekeeper and note taker.** Once you have a quorum, ask one participant to be the timekeeper and another to take notes. You will, of course, take notes yourself, but having additional help will keep you focused on facilitation rather than dictation.
- **Ask members to identify themselves each time they speak.** Because participants can't actually see one another, self-identification ultimately makes the discussion flow more easily. If a member forgets to identify himself or herself, take it upon yourself to make the identification as quickly and as unobtrusively as possible.
- **Call on the silent.** Lack of visual clues can easily result in people stepping in on each

other's conversation or, more likely, in one or two members dominating the discussion. It's up to you to provide balance and to call upon those who remain quiet. You will need to ascertain whether their silence is the result of agreement, disagreement, or shyness.

- **Poll each member.** It's up to you to solicit full participation. If you take a vote, register each participant. In fact, poll each member each time you reach a decision point. Bottom line, never assume.
- **Watch the clock.** As in any meeting, work with your timekeeper. Groups naturally gravitate toward less difficult issues, which can quickly waste valuable time. Keep the discussion moving toward substantive issues and outcomes.
- **Consider alternatives for difficult issues.** You may discover that the more difficult issues cannot be resolved on the telephone. If the group cannot reach consensus or engages in a heated disagreement, it may well be that a conference call is not the best communication mechanism for that particular issue. Acknowledge that fact and either give members time to reflect and eventually convene a second call or, if necessary, find another way to meet and work things out.
- **Review assignments and close positively.** End the call on a positive note, then reiterate the tasks and deadlines and the individuals assigned to carry them out. Congratulate your colleagues on their fine work, and thank them for their time.

As soon as the call is complete, prepare the to-do list with the deadlines and designees and send it out immediately. Within the week, if not sooner, gather your notes from the call and summarize the proceedings for all participants. Most of us tend to quickly forget what we say and promise to do, so this point can't be emphasized strongly enough.

It also helps to solicit feedback about how participants viewed the usefulness of the call. Did it accomplish its aims? Are there areas in which you can improve your facilitation skills? Most of us are unaware of our own telephone habits, and this kind of feedback can be enormously helpful.

(Adapted from an article by Susan Fox, executive director of the Society of American Archivists, on asaenet.org)

LEADERSHIP JAZZ: Last week I mentioned the book club we're trying for the Chicago Annual Meeting, where participants will read and discuss *Leadership Jazz* by Max DePree. In response, the inimitable and clever Marion Smithberger from the Columbus Bar Association queried whether *Leadership Jazz* is better than *Bar Association Blues*:

The dues are down,
The roof is leakin'
And the president
Is bangin' on da door
I got those lo down
Can't dry my shoes out
Bar association blues

If someone composes some blues music, we can make this the official song of NABE!