



NOTE: Throughout, I have shaped some responses slightly to give them parallel structure and active form. I did not change the substance of any response in the process.

Your organizational goals vary from the hopefully descriptive to highly specific and practical to almost existential! One response, the first below, was almost emblematic of the group of answers; other reactions to the questions follow.

Building community. After the pandemic the strong sense of community that our bar once had does not feel as strong as it once was. In addition, many of those who have formed the foundation of our bar community for so many years are approaching retirement. It is my "hope" to strengthen the sense of community and belonging for all bar members and especially those newer lawyers who we want to be engaged members in the pipeline for leadership one day.

- Renewing the organization's "singular determination"
- Being intentional and thoughtful
- Taking a more proactive approach to create the future that we want; pivoting away from doing things from a reactive manner
- Involving the organization in revisiting its purpose and mission—its "why"
- Building a pipeline of future leaders by actively engaging younger and newer members at the section and committee level and via mentor/mentee opportunities
- Working towards enticing and integrating law students and newer attorneys into substantive and leadership bar roles
- Clarifying how the organization can help other bar leaders identify problems and implement solutions and communicating this assistance to those members/leaders.
- Providing opportunities for career development
- Working to develop a road back for disbarred lawyers (not currently available in the state)

In sum, as a group you appear to be focusing on:

Building and re-building community and a sense of belonging within the bar.

This will require strategies that focus on and engage newer lawyers and build a leadership pipeline; the bar organization will need to find ways to assist all lawyers and integrate them into that organization's legal community.

When you as leaders shared organizational accomplishments, you again ranged a great deal, from what we might think of as accomplishments at the level of strategy or framework to those at the level of achievement of specific objectives.

Among the accomplishments listed, you and/or your organizations have:

- Developed a strategic framework—not a strategic plan—for the organization with the organization's leadership. It was pointedly different from a strategic plan. We set the 6 or so goals/objectives we should always be looking to improve and expand on. And then I challenged members of our executive committee to tackle tasks or action items towards those goals based on their capacity and interests.
- Re-engaged members of the judiciary in the organization. We have struggled in more recent years to have participation from our judiciary in our bench-bar committee. Rather than lament the lack of engagement, we affirmatively reached out with personalized invitations and positive messages to the judiciary inviting and welcoming their participation and, to our surprise, some began attending. The work remained the focus and we are very grateful for their participation.
- Created a program to increase interest in mental health and wellness by re-framing the discussion from one focused on problems to one focused on maximizing our performance to benefit clients, ourselves and society. It was received very positively.
- Used moments to listen to my directors and get their perspectives before jumping in with my thoughts.
- Reached out to those showing influence, interest and situational leadership to see if they'd like to become official leaders by positive expectation.
- Arrived at a final strategic plan one-pager.
- Made personal contact with members for a fundraising event.
- Focused on judicial independence by placing pressure on our legislators and governor to keep third branch of government vital.
- Responded to Covid by applying a crisis-infused focus with all on board.

When asked to share an example of imbedding change in a goal or trying a new path—particularly without having advance clarity (aka taking a risk)—you provided these examples:

- Returning to in-person-only meetings.
- Creating leadership roles for diverse groups (which has met some [resistance] including our organization being sued).

- Launching a “Futures Commission” for building a common vision.
- Moving onto social media and revamping the website. Even though these measures were not designed for our core members at the time, I listened to what the younger lawyers wanted and how they’re used to getting information delivered to them.
- Like many organizations, through the pandemic we had to imbed change into our goals and we had to take risks by moving toward virtual engagement of our members. We are still struggling to get buy-in to technology like text-to-vote from some of our more senior members. We have found that gradual change is more likely to gain acceptance but, unfortunately, the pandemic gave us very little time to make the necessary shifts.
- Presenting an alternative view of lawyer wellness: In Chicago last summer we offered a program featuring a former Olympic runner to help lawyers view wellness as a part of performance. Attendance was strong and lawyers were receptive to the concept. It was a definite risk to present it as we did.
- Intentionally setting aside time to plan and reflect as a board is quite important. We have done annual board retreats for this single purpose alone.
- Encouraging open-door policy, openness to programming topics, see what other bars are doing to avoid topic/member blindspots.

One of you noted honestly—“Need to do this.” I love it.

You learn from failure like champions! And you're honest about it—another key hallmark of leadership. I summarize and quote from some of your comments below.

You “[have] too many to recount [and] fully believe ALL failures are learning opportunities or in fact part of the learning process.” You then “review for missed opportunity, look for opportunity to train staff and influence members.” Sometimes, the opportunity to learn from a failure and make future change can relate to effectively identifying where there may be a “squeaky wheel” problem, as one of you noted by saying “Isolate the problem, overpower that person with the right votes, majorities.”

Several of you gave failure and learning-from-failure examples that, in one way or another, relate to controversy and handling a balance of views: when and how to present various sides of an issue, and when and how to take sides on an issue.

- At the Chicago meeting last summer, we had one presentation on a controversial topic about the future of law practice in which it was seen as too one-sided. Many in attendance were angry and wanted more balance, like a debate. We have talked about that at length and resolved to keep more balance going forward. And we have said so to those who were mad about it.

- We have struggled with finding the right line to draw with respect to Keller/Janus. To the extent we have failed, it has been that we have erred on the side of too much caution. If we were to continue to exercise such great caution there would be very little purpose or significance to the work we do as a mandatory bar. As lawyers and stewards of the organization, we tend to be conservative when it comes to risk taking but, at a given point, I anticipate we will need to be willing to take more risk so that our members continue to believe we provide value as a bar. It will be a challenge to move past our extreme caution and I am hopeful that through more education we will get more comfortable with resuming some of our former activities, including certain lobbying in particular.
- The one challenge we have had is that sometimes a split of opinion on a topic (polarized views on statements about shared tragedies nationally) tends to dilute or suspend support messages. Often have to use sister bar statements to persuade re: tone.

Here are your practical tips or tools for your fellow leaders on reminders, communications, etc.—those things that make the all-important consistency and follow-through easier to manage. As one of you noted, however, we all “need help getting through the communication clutter.”

- Communicate often and repeatedly.
- Create timelines to stay on top of projects—it's vital. We have a great organization. That allows us to keep on point.
- Communicate—updates, weekly, regularly.
- Make personal calls.
- Strive to have more consistency and unity in the messaging of the organization. I believe in consistency in branding and messaging and it is a goal of mine that we strive to have more unified messaging. I am also a firm believer that our word is our bond. If we commit to doing something, we have no choice but to follow through.
- Communicate on two levels: Blast communications are part of what must be done, but personal contact on important matters is also crucial.
- Avoid “paralysis by analysis.”
- Consider your team's needs and schedules. Push-up emails as gentle reminders, and try to figure out how your team best likes to communicate.