

Staying member-focused: Five Actions by the San Diego County Bar Association to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic

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Like everyone else, in the past several weeks in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we've experience tremendous change in the way we work, learn, and interact. At the San Diego County Bar Association, we've been adapting to rapid changes and working to address the needs of our 10,000 members in a quickly-evolving environment. Here are five strategies we've employed in the past month, and how we've planted the seeds to move forward to continue supporting our members.

1. We closed our Bar Center, moved to virtual staff and programs in early March

We made the decision to close our Bar Center and move to a virtual staff operation in early in March, to take every precaution to safeguard the health of our staff, our members and their clients, and the public. We have decided to maintain the closure through May 1, and will continue to evaluate the circumstances as they develop.

We immediately moved all substantive programs to webinar format (through our normal webinar provider) and all meetings to teleconference or Zoom. We also started quickly adding special programs (addressed in #3 below), and we will continue to roll out special programming in the coming weeks and months.

We sent an early email communication to our entire membership notifying them of operational changes, and we have continued to communicate with the membership regularly (see below in #2).

2. We added special resources and communications, via email and social media

In addition to our regular weekly *This Week at the Bar* email communication to members, from March 5 through April 3, we sent special additional emails to our membership from me and our Executive Director addressing topics related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our communications addressed operational updates, identified special resources, programs, and offerings, and worked to address the uncertainty and anxiety our members are experiencing with health concerns and tremendous disruptions to their daily work and personal lives.

We've received positive feedback from our members about our communications, particularly that we communicated early and often. Here are the links to those communications:

[4/6/2020 President's Message in *This Week at the Bar*](#)

[4/3/2020 Special President's Message to the SDCBA Membership](#)

[3/30/2020 President's Message in *This Week at the Bar*](#)

[3/27/2020 Take Our Member Survey and See our Latest Update on SDCBA Operations and COVID-19](#)

[3/23/2020 President's Message in *This Week at the Bar*](#)

[3/20/2020 Update to Members from SDCBA Executive Director and President re COVID-19](#)

[3/16/2020 SDCBA President's Message in *This Week at the Bar*](#)
[3/13/2020 Important Update on SDCBA Events and Operations](#)
[3/9/2020 President's Message in *This Week at the Bar*](#)
[3/5/2020 Important Message Regarding SDCBA Operations and Coronavirus](#)

We also created the following additional resources and communicated them to our members via our [homepage](#), the above emails, and our [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Twitter](#) pages.

- Developed a special webpage dedicated to updates from [state and federal trial and appellate courts](#) across California,
- Assembled a special webpage collective [community resources](#),
- Have collected [helpful articles](#) on our Blog,
- Created a repository for [educational webinars](#), and
- Offered special [technology resources](#).

Finally, the SDCBA made a [public statement](#) denouncing racist, xenophobic terms used to describe COVID-19 or the coronavirus. We continue to stand for our values, which include community, inclusion, and leadership, and thought it vital to speak out on this issue.

3. Special programs on technology and wellness

On the programming front, we made early decisions to reschedule two big signature events, so that we weren't left in limbo about whether they would go forward. We also moved all other programs to webinars.

To address special needs during these evolving times, we have worked to produce content specifically designed to help our members cope and succeed in the new normal—covering topics such:

- [working remotely](#)
- conducting [legal functions via video conferencing](#), and
- wellness programming, [including yoga](#) (offered daily from 8-9 a.m.) and [guided meditation sessions](#)

In the coming weeks, we will host sessions on marketing your business in a down economy and staying connected while social distancing, as well as a [virtual lunch/town hall with President Johanna Schiavoni and Executive Director Jill Epstein on April 15 at 12:30 p.m.](#)

4. Member survey

We recently distributed a Member Survey, asking the following 7 questions designed to elicit feedback, ideas, concerns, and questions from our membership, and to seek potential expertise from among our members to present programs or write articles on relevant topics.

We continue to capture responses to the survey. Once the survey is closed, we'll synthesize the feedback to report to our Board and the membership (see #5 below), and to implement the ideas for resources, programs, or other offerings that our membership is seeking from us. The following are the survey questions we utilized:

SDCBA Member Survey

1. What are the primary issues for which you would like guidance from our local courts?
2. What programs, resources, or other support would be helpful for the SDCBA to provide at this time?
3. What communication tools have you found helpful during this time? Check all that apply:
 - a. SDCBA special COVID-19 update emails
 - b. This Week at the Bar/President's Messages on Mondays
 - c. SDCBA social media channel updates
 - d. SDCBA website and special page updates
4. What has the SDCBA done well for you so far, and what could we do differently?
5. Are you interested in providing helpful webinars and/or resources to SDCBA members relating to the pandemic, like managing a law practice through crisis? Leadership, communication, or technology topics? Specific subject matter sessions? Others? If you have ideas or expertise to share, please let us know.
6. In what ways could the SDCBA be of assistance once the COVID-19 crisis is behind us?
7. Please provide any other feedback or ideas not yet captured:

We are closing the survey this week and will be reviewing the responses for big takeaways and ideas. Over the weeks and months to come, we will be acting upon the input and suggestions from our members.

5. Virtual lunch/town hall with the SDCBA President and Executive Director

On April 15, [SDCBA Executive Director Jill Epstein and I will host a virtual lunch/town hall](#), where we intend to report the results of our members survey, take questions and ideas, and provide an opportunity for social connection among our members.