



RHODE ISLAND Bar Association

RHODE ISLAND BAR ASSOCIATION STRATEGIC PLANNING – FIVE YEAR PLAN 2011-2015

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The Strategic Planning Committee (hereinafter “SPC”) was charged with reviewing and revising the Rhode Island Bar Association goals and objectives to ensure we are doing the best we can to meet or exceed member expectations. The committee has concluded its work and has developed a proposed mission statement and a five year-year strategic plan of goals, objectives and an action plan for the Association.

The SPC commenced its work with a series of meetings and discussions and a survey of the entire membership designed to assist us in developing a solid profile of our members and in assessing the Association’s priorities. In addition the Committee reviewed and discussed the comprehensive reports that were produced by the Task Force on New Lawyers, Task Force on the Future of the Practice and Task Force on Pro Bono.

Elizabeth Derrico, Associate Director of the Division for Bar Services of the American Bar Association, was retained to serve as facilitator and consultant for the strategic planning process. We were cognizant of proposing a plan that is not too broad and where attention and time was paid in particular to achieve specific and reasonable goals that fit with the plan and the mission of the organization and which includes a vision of the organization in the future.

The Committee reviewed the current mission statement and reviewed the results of the membership survey in detail. We had a very good response to the membership survey.

Members of the Bar were asked to prioritize and value the eight current goals as set out in the Association's current Strategic Plan. It was clear from the comments that a number of members are not aware of some of the current programs and services provided by the Bar Association. A strong focus on information and communication was suggested and a need for bar programs and services to stay current with member's needs, further professional development, and promote access to justice and a positive public image for the legal profession.

Survey Report to the Strategic Planning Committee: Discussion at meetings followed on the results of the survey and in particular, the comments received from the 700 respondents. The sense of the group was that the respondents clearly feel that the highest priority of the organization is to maintain and enhance the professional integrity, ethics and competency of the lawyers in Rhode Island through continuing education and professional development.

Discussion followed regarding the professional development programs of the Association and the opportunities to expand and advance those services. CLE is a very positive and highly utilized member service. In addition, correlation with the trend for greater utilization of technology seems to demonstrate that online CLE will become more utilized as well as webinars. These allow for a greater range of courses. Given the high participation by our members in CLE programming, the Bar Association has the best opportunity to provide the members with current, affordable, and relevant educational programming that will meet their needs.

Survey results also suggested that the Association might help lawyers better use technology to reduce the cost of practicing law. Members see the value and utilize advances in technology both in bar activities and in their practice. The electronic services provided by RIBA are being used by a good percentage of the members. Members are visiting the RIBA website, in particular using the free online library Casemaker®, CLE registration, and our online directory.

The next most recognized priority identified by the membership was for the Association to foster civility and collegiality among its members and good will between the bar and the public; encourage lawyer professionalism, ethics, competency, and lawyer-client relations. While many respondents recognized the difficulties and challenges with this goal, it was clearly something that the membership would like to see the organization continue to make a priority. Discussion focused on how the Association might work with the Courts to improve civility. Also discussed were possible articles in the Bar Journal and expanded continuing legal education in this area.

Another high priority for respondents was the base of benefits, programs and services provided to members. There was a clear consensus that those services and benefits should be geared toward assisting members with their practice and business. Discussion focused on proposing credit for broader MCLE programming including financial management, marketing and time management. Discussion also focused on additional nontraditional programming such as the programs produced by the New Attorney Advancement Task Force. The suggestion was made that the Bar Association should consider the needs of new lawyers who are graduating without jobs but are required to pass the bar exam and join the

Association. Also, if they want to get a job (and, as a related matter, what do we do to provide them with practical, legal skills); involving more young lawyers and assisting older lawyers who do not necessarily retire when originally planned due to economic conditions. There were a number of different models discussed for alternative ways to provide “mentoring” to new lawyers. It was noted by several members of the committee that personal outreach to new lawyers is very effective in building trust and encouraging involvement. A suggestion was made for Bar Leadership/President to sponsor a series of breakfasts with different groups, including the managing partners of law firms, to outline the value of encouraging their young associates in Bar Association activities. and alternative dispute resolution (e.g. arbitration, mediation, court funding, judicial impact statements, etc.).

Also reviewed were responses regarding the provision of legal services and access to justice. While a good number of respondents noted the importance of increasing public understanding of and respect for the law, the legal process, and the role of the legal profession, fewer felt that it should be a priority for the Association to necessarily promote active participation from all members or to actively promote diversity. There was some discussion and consensus that the organization should make its best efforts to inform the members of all the opportunities of membership but to accept that not all will avail themselves.

Facilitated Brainstorming

A facilitated discussion was held to brainstorm a vision and goals for the organization. The initial exercise and discussions focused on creating context for the plan by identifying opportunities and challenges facing the lawyers and the organized bar. Several themes emerged:

- Advancing technology has broad implications for the courts, clients and practitioners.
- Practical skill building and maintaining standards of civility and professionalism among members, particularly young and new lawyers, is increasingly important.
- The administration of justice faces significant challenges
- Greater respect for the lawyers, the law and the legal system needs attention.

The consensus of the committee was that the “vision” of the Association should include pride in membership, and a commitment to justice. The Committee focused on developing a greater appreciation by the membership of all the valuable service and programs provided by the organization. It was noted that Bar Association should utilize the great strides in technology to articulate and communicate the value of the benefits to the membership both how the Association can serve their needs and how the members can serve the organization. With that in mind, the SPC recommended the following mission and goals for next five years.

2015 Vision of the Rhode Island Bar Association

Building on our deep traditions of professionalism, advocacy and service, the Rhode Island Bar Association is the preeminent leader on behalf of the profession. By being innovative and foresighted in serving the needs of practitioners, the community, and the administration of justice, our members are proud to be Rhode Island lawyers.

Goal #1

To provide members with valuable, relevant services that promote professional competence.

Goal #2

To be indispensable to new/young lawyers.

Goal #3

To be a positive public voice on behalf of lawyers and the judicial system.

Goal #4

To facilitate access to justice.

Goal #5

To foster the relationship between the bench and the bar to our mutual benefit.

Goal #6

To maintain an infrastructure that supports us in fulfilling our vision.

*Listed in no particular order

The final meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee was devoted to reviewing draft vision and goals and develop an action plan. After discussion the following full Strategic Plan is proposed for your consideration.

Thank you.



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MISSION STATEMENT: *The Mission of the Rhode Island Bar is to represent the Legal Profession of the State, Serve the Public and the Profession and Promote Justice, Professional Excellence and Respect for the Law.*

2015 Vision of the Rhode Island Bar Association

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Goal # 1 - To provide members with valuable, relevant services that promote professional competence.

- We will be the primary resource for members' professional development.
- We will seek out evaluation tools to assist members in their practice.
- We will keep members current in practice management and technology.
- We will monitor current membership benefits and develop additional programs as needed.
- We will ensure the adherence to the highest ethical standards.
- We will continue to advance and support the Lawyers Helping Lawyers programs to enhance the quality of life for members.

Goal #2 - To be indispensable to new/young lawyers.

- We will meet them where they are and providing what they value.
- We will assist new lawyers with the transition to practice.
- We will encourage the participation of new lawyers and law students in Association activities and continue joint programs with the Law School.

- We will continue to review and develop an effective Bridge the Gap Program.
- We will pursue the effective use of technology.

Goal #3 - To be a positive public voice on behalf of lawyers and the judicial system.

- We will work to improve the administration of the courts.
- We will advocate on behalf of fair and impartial courts.
- We will promote public confidence in the legal system and role of lawyers.
- We will continue to encourage, recognize and publicize community involvement of members
- We will encourage each member to promote the integrity of the legal profession and improve the public's perception of lawyers.

Goal #4 - To facilitate access to justice.

- We will support the delivery of legal services to the under-served through pro bono and affordable legal service programs.
- We will provide public service through community partnerships and law related education.
- We will utilize technology to increase the volume and quality of public services aimed at providing information and education to the public.
We will increase public awareness of the Client Reimbursement and Fee Arbitration programs.

Goal #5 - To foster the relationship between the bench and the bar to our mutual benefit.

- We will meet regularly with the Courts and effectively communicating and cooperating on issues of concern.
- We will involve the Judiciary in educational programming and law related education.
- We will respond to unjust criticism in a fair and timely manner.
- We will support adequate funding of the Courts to ensure access to justice.

Goal #6 - To maintain an infrastructure that supports us in fulfilling our vision.

- We will promote active and diverse participation in the programs of the Rhode Island Bar Association.
- We will continue to develop the financial resources to support programs.
- We will continue regular and consistent communications with members and review the needs and concerns advanced by the members.

- We will continue to monitor technology related to the practice of law.
- We will establish task forces as needed and eliminate the committees with sparse interest and no clear objectives.
- We will continue to monitor the activities of the ABA and other organizations and provide information of interest to our members.

Adopted by Strategic Planning Committee
Approved and recommended by Executive Committee
Approved and adopted by House of Delegates