ABA Communications Strategy

“Promoting ABA as the trusted leader representing the motorcoach, travel and tourism community”

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the 2017-2018 ABA Communication Strategy, which reflects the goals of the Association to be the trusted leader representing and supporting the motorcoach, travel and tourism community.

Our mission statement:

ABA is committed to maximizing the success of its motorcoach, tour and travel members by:

• Representing the industry in the government policy arena;
• Facilitating industry buyer-seller interface;
• Supporting industry through engagement, research and education of members to help improve their success.

CONTEXT

Priorities & Objectives

The ABA Board of Directors set out the Strategic Goals of the Association:

ABA’s Strategic Goals:

1. **Provide** a unified, influential voice with a focus on key issues impacting our members
2. **Engage and grow** ABA membership
3. **Deliver** the leading Marketplace for member buying/selling
4. **Support** the work of the ABA Foundation
5. **Communicate** information to advance the motorcoach and travel industry
6. **Evolve** the ABA organization’s capabilities to meet member needs.

This provides the framework for all our proactive communication activities.

The Strategy will be shaped by core principles and add emphasis on relationships and partnerships, accountability, and results:

• Focus on clear objectives and key audiences:
  *What do we want to achieve, who are we talking to, and what do they need?*

• Cultivate partnerships with media, regulating agencies, and other associations in the transportation, travel and tourism industry:
  *Explore opportunities for more frequent, less formal engagement*

• Ensure even greater cooperation and sharing of best practices between the national association and state associations:
  *Share plans, messages, event ideas, and results*

• Develop qualitative metrics for tracking results and success:
  *Has membership grown? Is the favourability of ABA higher with members and inside the industry than competing organizations? Are we seeing increased media mentions and requests?*
Based on these strategic goals, we will pursue five strategic communication campaigns:

**Advocacy:** Drive legislative and regulatory oversight framework at all government levels to eliminate obstacles and promote the success of our industry.

To help Advocacy achieve their objective, Communications will:

- Work with Advocacy team on priorities and develop strategies built around them to enhance Advocacy’s impression on influencers.
- Promote Advocacy efforts through email and social media channels to inform and engage members in advocacy efforts.
- Deliver to Advocacy a website that educates members, government officials and decisionmakers on issues important to ABA and the industry.
- Help build coalitions with other associations and government agencies to promote industry’s safety and security objectives as well as ABA’s reputation and influence on Capitol Hill and governing agencies.
- Develop media-ready statements on issues that ABA has taken a stance on. Utilize relationships with trade and mainstream media to promote ABA’s voice on issues.

**Membership:** Continue overall membership growth with focus on all segments of the motorcoach, tour and travel industry.

To help Membership achieve their objective, Communications will:

- Work with Membership team to continue to design and implement strategies that compliment membership sales team’s objectives.
- Promote ABA as the only association businesses in the motorcoach, tour and travel industry need to belong to by publicizing ABA’s story, benefits, etc.
- Showcase ABA’s breadth and reach in the industry by showcasing ABA’s presence and leadership at conferences and meetings across the country. #ABAEverywhere #ABAWorkingForYou
- Produce content to promote ABA benefits for hard mailings, emails and social media content to reach a larger audience of potential members. Utilize social media for an ad campaign targeting audiences that are in the industry or want to be a part of the industry.
- Promote ABA members to others in the industry and consumers to showcase how ABA helps members business.

**Annual Meeting & Marketplace:** Deliver the leading marketplace for member buying/selling.

To help Meetings achieve their objective, Communications will:

- Work with Meetings to develop strategies and partnerships to help sell the Annual Meeting & Marketplace to a wider audience and lead to member recruitment.
- Communicate the benefits of attending the show geared to different segments.
• Utilize social media ad campaign to target potential attendees
• Promote the show and the value on social media channels and publications.
• Develop attendee referral videos to use throughout the year.
• Utilize speakers as Ambassadors for the show, have them create videos.
• Develop a user-friendly, engaging show website.

**ABA Foundation:** Support the work of the ABA Foundation

To help the ABA achieve its objective of supporting the ABA Foundation, Communications will:

• Work with Foundation team on strategies to best engage members on both the scholarship side and research side of priorities.
• Communicate the industry’s impact utilizing the Foundation’s research data to help enhance advocacy efforts, support membership and build ABA’s reputation.
• Work with the Foundation team on communications such as press releases, letters and solicitations, and promotions.
• Promote the Foundation’s fundraising efforts through social media channels and publications utilizing videos, blogs and announcements.

**Publishing, Communications and Social Media:** Communicate the value ABA contributes to the industry and its members.

• Develop strategies for major ABA programs and refine strategies as need to create the biggest impact on members and influencers.
• Develop positive relationships with trade and mainstream media to establish ABA as the industry leader and go-to resource on all things related to motorcoach, travel and tour issues.
• Maintain and deliver a portfolio including online publications, magazine, membership directory that add value. *This will be measured by annual survey. Goal is to keep satisfaction rate above 80 percent.*
• Utilize all media channels including traditional print publications, digital and social media to promote ABA, its membership and the industry's impact.
• Create the right content to match member needs/interests to promote member awareness and engagement. *One message does not fit all. Will develop messaging on all programs and events geared to motorcoach operators and the travel and tourism members.*
• Provide media support to members dealing with a crisis. Will contact or respond to all members involved in any form of crisis and offer to handle the media for them.
• Grow social media channels members by engaging ABA members and potential members on through advertisements, interesting posts and responding to members when they comment.
• Maintain a provocative website to encourage people to stay on longer and act as a resource for all things ABA and in the industry.
• Promote ABA its story, and benefits of membership to attract new members as well as engage current members across all media platforms.

**Resources & Tools**

While we are a small association, we have great wealth of resources in terms of knowledge, publications and members. We should leverage our members into a community that is readily available to respond to media inquiries as well as calls to action on Capitol Hill.

We have our digital social tools as well as the traditional tools for outreach to our constituencies such as the ABA website, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and media databases.

We will seek to expand our efforts further this year by:

• Mobilizing and utilizing ABA Communication, GAP and other committees as well as our Councils.
• Developing deeper and more productive relationships with both mainstream and trade journalists.
• Continuing to enhance our digital and online activity, through new innovations.
• Utilizing a database of industry statistics to be a resource library about the impact of the motorcoach, travel and tourism industry on the U.S. economy.

**Working Across the Network**

The network of state associations should be vital to our influencing agenda in the industry and outside constituencies (i.e. media and Congress). We need to continue cultivating the relationships and membership with the state associations so they are on board with our marketing and communication activities, as well as political grassroots.

We will maximize the benefits of working together across the country as we deliver this strategy; but we will also need to recognize that the specific activities of each individual state association in delivering this strategy will be different, in line with their local context and the opportunities which it offers.