ABA Communications Board of Directors Report

Melanie Hinton/Spring 2018

Introduction:

It has been a successful and busy first quarter for ABA Communications. We released a number of statements and announcements on several industry issues and ABA programs. We partnered with Trucker Against Trafficking’s Busing on the Lookout program. We were quite active in the lead up and during ABA’s Annual Meeting & Marketplace in Charlotte.

Government Affairs & Policy:

We have been quite busy on the legislative and regulatory side of the association. ABA continues to show support on a number of travel and tourism issues, such as: funding cuts for Brand USA; funding cuts for state tourism offices; and visa processing issues.

ABA also made several statements regarding Intercity Bus Security Grant program funding; tax reform, National Park Service fee increases and other issues affecting the motorcoach industry.

ABA Annual Meeting & Marketplace 2018

ABA Communications tried a number of new initiatives to promote ABA’s Annual Meeting & Marketplace in Charlotte. We worked with a number of our educational speakers to create promotional videos showcasing their sessions and Marketplace, these were often posted on social media on Marketplace Mondays. We utilized other days of the week to highlight our Council meetings, business appointments, networking and other advantages of ABA’s Marketplace on member businesses.

We also worked closely with #ABACorporate’s keynote speaker Steve Miller to promote the Sunday All-Delegate Lunch as well as ways Steve can help members improve their marketing activities.

Finally, for the first time ever we hosted a Twitter Board in the ABA lounge at the show showed all tweets going on during the show. This was a very entertaining and successful venture that we look forward to doing again in 2019 in Louisville.

Membership:

ABA continues to support the Meetings & Membership team through promotional pieces on social media and in publications.

ABA has changed its ABA Cares section from raising money for this past fall’s hurricanes to celebrating ABA’s Industry Heroes. ABA has also started promoting our Industry Heroes and their stories in Destinations magazine.

We continue to produce and utilize member interviews taken at various ABA and industry events to promote membership in ABA as well as the importance of attending ABA meetings.

Activities:
Media Engagement:

Since January, ABA has sent out 13 press releases regarding the Annual Meeting & Marketplace, happenings within the government affecting the industry, including Congressional tax reform, terrorism and the travel and tourism industry.

Media Statements:

Don’t Get Stranded Because You are Not ELD Compliant

ABA Partners with Busing on the Lookout to Combat Human Trafficking

ABA Foundation Names New Leadership

ABA, John Kennedy Consulting Premiere Partner Announce New Member Benefit

ABA and UMA Team Up for Legislative Fly-In

ABA Foundation Report Says Motorcoach Manufacturing Sales Grew in Q417

ABA Congratulates Raymond Martinez as New FMCSA Administrator

ABA Supports Rebuilding Infrastructure, Wary of Financing

Congratulations to the Award Winners Recognized at ABA’s Annual Meeting & Marketplace

Congratulations to the CTIS Class of 2018

ABA Elects New 2018 Leadership and Board Members During Annual Meeting

ABA Responds to National Travel & Tourism Office Report on the Decline of Inbound Travelers into the US

ABA Announces the Formation of the Asian Motorcoach Council and School Bus Council

Media Hits:

ABA has covered by the following news outlets:

Politico Influence

Politico Morning Transportation

Metro Magazine

e-Turbo News

FTN News

International Travel Report

Targeted News Service

Travel Wire News

Mass Transit Magazine
Social Media Activities

For 2018 Marketplace, we created a hashtag contest promoting the show's hashtag #ABACharlotte. The contest started two weeks before the show and went throughout the show with a Twitterboard set up in the ABA Lounge area. Just in Twitter and Instagram there were more than 625 posts using the #ABACharlotte hashtag. Our reach was phenomenal thanks to groups like Broadway with more than 250k followers socialling from the show.

Our #ABACharlotte campaign was successful in attracting Facebook followers as well as we saw 150 new followers join the two weeks around the event. One the last day of the event, we went over the 5,000 followers mark. Our most popular post during #ABACharlotte was Camille JeBran receiving the Women in Buses award with a reach of more than 4,500k and 400 likes. In second place, came the Louisville 2019 promotional video with more than 4,000 views and 330 likes.

During Women's Month (March) we posted the interview we had with Camille during the show with her sharing stories about her 85 years of being in the motorcoach business. The three videos had a reach of more than 4,700 and over 200 likes and comments. Also, for International Women's Day, we posted a guest blog by Ryhan Cornell titled "Women, Like Men, Bring Strengths to a Business." This blog reached more than 1,400 people.

We have made a concerted effort to utilize calendar “National” days and months to promote our members as well as the industry through social media. We have seen a great success with this initiative as members consistently like and share our posts.

We continue to see our social media channels grow:

**Facebook:** 4868 in Dec. to 5,108 (as of April 9) We created a buzz campaign to reach 5,000 followers by Marketplace.

**Twitter:** 3917 in Dec. to 4,057 (as of April 9)

**LinkedIn:** 3568 in Dec. to 3,582 (as of April 9)

**Instagram:** 440 in Dec. to 569 (as of April 9)

To put in context our competitors’ social media numbers are:

**United Motorcoach Association**

**Facebook:** 2,030 as of April 9

**Twitter:** 1,246 as of April 9

**National Tour Association**

**Facebook:** 4,942 as of April 9

**Twitter:** 10.8k as of April 9
Crisis Communication

ABA continues its campaign to educate our bus and tour operator members about ABA’s Crisis Communications member benefit. ABA Communications participated in an Amphibious Vehicle Summit to discuss the issue of crisis communications and what members need to do to prepare for an accident. ABA Communications also helped members prepare crisis communications plans as well as deal with customer service communications issues.

QT Transport (3/9)
First Class Tours (3/12)
Storer Transportation (3/26)

ABA also provided “other” communications assistance to members, whether it was to help them create a crisis communications plan or deal with difficult customer service situations:

International Stage Lines (4/2)

Human Trafficking Partnerships

In March, ABA officially partnered with Truckers Against Trafficking’s Busing on the Lookout program. Through this partnership, ABA will continue to promote TAT BOTL training to ABA members and highlight ABA members that go through the program. ABA also created a webpage under the About section on buses.org showcasing our commitment to promote the eradication of human trafficking.

ABA is also joining forces with Airline Ambassadors International in their human trafficking campaign in the transportation industry. ABA will sign a dear colleague letter supporting AAI’s initiative to not only combat human trafficking but to encourage the hiring of qualified employees who were once trafficked.

ABA’s New Email System

You may have noticed a new look and feel in the Bus Bulletin and Tour Stop (respectively). ABA has launched a new email system that will allow us to send more interactive emails and e-newsletters to members. It will also allow us to track opens, web link clicks and unsubscribes, which will enable us to get a better feel for the types of communications our members are looking for and need.

ABA Communications Committee Becomes ABA Editorial Board

After reflection on the utilization of the Communications Committee in the past, in March ABA felt that the best role the Committee members could play would be as an active Editorial Advisory Committee. As the new Editorial Advisory Committee, this group will help our publisher – YGS – shape the focus of the editorial content for not only Destinations magazine but all of ABA’s publications (The Insider, Tour Stop, Bus Bulletin) by giving us feedback on what you would like to see more or less of, what topics are not currently being discussed but should be on the radar, etc. These ideas can also shape ABA’s blogs and other communications products.
We plan to hold quarterly conference calls and then do an Editorial Board Meeting during ABA’s Annual Meeting & Marketplace since most members of the committee are all in one place. We may also do in-person smaller meet ups when the opportunity presents itself.