American Bus Association
Strategic Plan Draft
2018-2020

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ABA is committed to maximizing the success of its bus, tour and travel members by:
• Representing industry in the government policy arena
• Facilitating industry buyer-seller interface
• Support industry through engagement, research & education of members to help improve their success
Strategic Objectives

1. Provide a unified, influential voice with a focus on key issues that impact 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. Publish information to advance the bus and travel industry
6. Evolve the ABA organization capabilities to meet member needs

Specific results which can be measured. May change in 3-5 years.
Summary of Strategy

Serve as an indispensable resource for:
- Motor coach industry advocacy
- Facilitating member buying/selling through Marketplace and other opportunities

Mission & Values
Why we exist
What we believe, how we behave

Situation Analysis
Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities & threats, vs. marketplace, shapes the strategic focus

Strategic Objectives
Specific targets

Balanced Scorecard
How we track progress as we implement the plan

Strategy
Integrated set of choices designed to meet objectives
Government Affairs

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

**Targets for 2020**

- Change/modify existing regulations: report on successes
- Legislative impact on industry: report on successes

**Staff Engagement**

- Prevent onerous/burdensome regulatory actions: report on successes
- Resource management in support of Government Affairs targets

**Strategies**

- Staffing: Maintain a strong internal group complemented by use of outside counsel
- Added K&L Gates in addition to Capitol Tax
- Create member engagement & understanding, so they participate in advocacy efforts
  - Open operator meeting at Annual Meeting & Marketplace to increase participation
  - Continued associations’ meeting in 2018 and beginning outreach now to state associations to hold a meeting in 2019 and holding quarterly calls with associations and the GAP staff attends many state association meetings
- Orchestrate one on one member meetings with targeted legislators and regulators - Held targeted Congressional transportation leadership meetings with ABA leaders
- Coalition building to enhance our positions
  - Seek to provide unified voice (Re-engage with UMA on coordination)
- Gather and use data that supports our advocacy efforts – Data Access issues, National Parks, NAPITA
Government Affairs

Strategies

→ Conduct research to support policy development in coordination with the Foundation with the objective of repealing/modifying regulations and preventing promulgation of burdensome regulations

→ Ongoing evaluation of opportunities and threats that could have policy impact

Staff Engagement

→ Monitor/Review Executive Branch regulatory reform efforts

→ Review existing regulations; identify regulations for repeal/modification; communicate list to appropriate agency or file petition

→ Track government-wide, agency new administrative actions, engage in rulemaking process as appropriate

→ Develop/enhance agency relationships

→ Participate in advisory groups, negotiated rulemakings and other agency meetings – ABA holds seats on the FMCSA Advisory Council and the Travel and Transportation Infrastructure Committee

→ Facilitate agency information gathering

→ Engage ABA membership in efforts to identify regulation for repeal/modification

→ Educate ABA membership on new administrative initiatives and engage membership in rulemaking process, as appropriate – Ongoing with ELDs and other requirements, monthly updates, conference calls, alerts and briefings

→ Enlist Congressional support as necessary

→ Provide scheduled reports on leadership and membership (and unscheduled reports, as appropriate) on regulatory activities to ABA leadership – Monthly GAP newsletter to Board and others, Board reports, tolling memos, and tax updates
Government Affairs

Strategies

Staff Engagement

- Working with ABA leadership, develop/identify ABA legislative policy objectives, including opportunities and threats
- Monitor and track legislative activity, seek alignment with ABA policy objectives
- Educate and work with legislative offices for support
- Work with industry leaders to build, support and advance beneficial legislative activity or defend from negative legislative activity
- Pursue coalition building to enhance policy positions – National Park fees, FAA and airport access issues, NAPITA
- Continue to maintain and grow BusPAC, to support participation in Hill related events - $50,000 to date
- Participate in Hill events and policy initiatives around D.C. : hearings, round tables, forums
- Continue to grow and improve Fly-In participation – Held a joint ABA/UMA fly in in April with more than 116 attending, the largest of any industry fly in
- Identify and facilitate research in support of legislative positions
- Maintain strong internal communication, within GAP and ABA generally to ensure proper coordinator and effective execution
- Continually evaluate capacity of GAP staff
- Ensure availability of appropriate information resources/services – Training, PAC software
Government Affairs

Strategies

Staff Engagement

→ Identify need for external resources (e.g. consultants, counsel, lobbyists) – K&L Gates and Capitol Tax

→ Work with state/regional association partners to expand resources and reach – Attending and sponsoring every state motorcoach association, when possible, and working with individual associations on common issues (examples: Midwest Motorcoach Assn. on the Chicago ordinance)

→ Continually evaluate/seek opportunities to build additional legislative/regulatory resource capability at existing ABA events (e.g. Marketplace, BISC, BusMARC etc.)
Engage and Grow Membership Base

2. Strategic Objective: Continue overall membership growth with focus on all current segments of the motor coach and travel industry

Targets for 2020
→ $ Dues Revenue (TBD)
→ Number of members by segment
→ Membership retention 90%+
→ Member engagement measured through association management (database) system (AMS)

Strategies
→ Recruiting
  → Target potential members to attract to ABA in each membership category

Staff Engagement
→ Conduct pop-up calls to members per category to discuss ABA value. Use these findings in future promotional materials
→ Capture deeper information on members/prospects with new AMS system
  → Use promo codes to determine effectiveness of campaigns
→ Segment travel types and target for membership using detailed operator member profile information
  → Targeting members in states and regions where staff are attending other meetings
→ Focus on the growing tour operator segment (buyers); define different types of tour operators (buyers) and determine membership types/levels when appropriate – Focus of attending IPW, Destination New England and other shows is to attract tour operators, both domestic and overseas operators
Engage and Grow Membership Base

Strategies

→ Target potential members to attract to ABA in each membership category, cont.

**Staff Engagement**

→ Use Foundation research to enhance and serve DMO segment, national chains and corporate groups
→ Conduct a campaign to attract new travel members; utilize existing DMO’s and schedule meetings with prospects at their facilities
→ Utilize one on one membership efforts with existing members reaching out to prospects – Staff will be more strategic in identifying existing member relations with prospects
→ Target council members who are not members of ABA – Creation of the School Bus Council has enabled ABA to reach out to school bus manufacturers and school bus operators who also own motorcoaches. Bus manufacturers have already expressed an interest in participating

State Associations and industry Meetings/Events

**Staff Engagement**

→ Obtain conference attendee lists for member/nonmember for post conference follow up – Staff is making a point of getting lists and following up with attendees immediately after each meeting
→ Membership staff to attend state bus and travel association meetings when appropriate – Attending every meeting where is invited
→ ABA to sponsor industry meetings and hold “on the road” events
→ Information packet and target lists given to non-MEMS staff who are attending meetings
→ Partner with state associations to offer dual memberships
→ Find ways to keep ABA memorable post-events and/or meetings
Engage and Grow Membership Base

Geographic and market segments where we are underrepresented

Staff Engagement

- Use existing data in coordination with ABA’s database to identify underrepresented geographic locations or areas and target companies within those regions
- Use future Annual Meeting & Marketplace cities as locations for ABA On-the-Road and identify potential businesses for membership
- At travel/tradeshows, schedule appointments with prospects prior to show attendance – This has been an effective way to ensure we are able to see targeted members
- Use BISC and BUSMARC as a resource for new members and schedule meetings with non-member attendees

Member-to-member recruiting

Staff Engagement

- Re-energize membership committee with new Member Get A Member campaign
- Conduct incentivization outreach to increase ABA promotional efforts – Where appropriate, to attract targeted operators to take appointments at Marketplace, incentives are offered
- Send personalized messages to prospects identifying existing ABA members in to establish credibility
- Use ASAE’s Marketing & Membership “Collaborate” portal to get suggestions on Membership Committee activities/duties to see what other associations are doing to make their Membership efforts effective
- Use existing committee members to build comradery with new members to help build a strong, ongoing relationship with the ABA (reinforcing our presence in North America)
- Assign ambassadors in segments of the country and utilize them to help recruit in their areas
- Provide incentives to recruit new members and Marketplace buyers
Engage and Grow Membership Base

→ Recruiting, cont.

→ Hire/allocate a dedicated sales person to do membership recruiting

  Staff Engagement
  → Currently we have 2 full-time sales people – Using a consultant to help develop membership strategies, engaging Jeff Goldwasser to help reach bus operators, considering a western consultant to help reach out to tour operators, travel prospects and motorcoach companies
  → Use CEO more to help sell (personalized letters, phone calls, meetings, etc.)
  → Segment sales by region - This strategy may change depending on the strengths of personnel

→ Use manufacturer sales force as an extension of ABA with appropriate commissions/incentives

  Staff Engagement
  → Incentivize bus manufacturers’ finance, insurance and sales staff to attract new bus operator members – Thoughts??

→ Direct communication efforts to support membership, recruitment and retention efforts
  → Weekly communication to members with tips and benefits
  → Generate targeted messages to members with relevant issues
  → Utilize AMS to track the success of membership campaigns
  → Ensure staff is informed of ABA’s recruiting goals, efforts and incentives – All staff will be kept informed of progress and new members that come in to ABA
Engage and Grow Membership Base

→ Marketing

→ Publicize our story and fully use social media marketing and interactive communications

**Staff Engagement**

→ Share member stories from all segments of membership through close coordination with the Communications Dept.

→ To utilize media platforms and ABA’s communications’ vehicles to increase promotional exposure

→ Monitor social media to recognize and engage with members

→ Utilize a marketer or marketing firm to create new membership materials

→ Promote ABA attendance at other events through social media

→ Electronic platform for member communication

**Staff Engagement**

→ Utilize AMS system to create member groups and communities

→ Collecting and sharing member operational issues and solutions

**Staff Engagement**

→ Utilize AMS system and other resources to create a content and discussion platform for ABA members to exchange information and solve problems
Engage and Grow Membership Base

→ Membership satisfaction surveys

  Staff Engagement
  → Utilize AMS system to understand member engagement and score satisfaction with the goal of developing better ways connect with members

→ Additional Valued Services: Scholarship programs, Best practice sharing, Councils, Training programs

  Staff Engagement
  → Continue to create new educational and networking opportunities through Women in Buses – All Councils will be asked to create opportunities to attract additional members
  → Continue to utilize MKPL education speakers to create more educational opportunities for members
ABA’s Annual Meeting & Marketplace

3. **Strategic Objective:** Deliver the leading marketplace for member buying/selling

**Targets for 2020**

- $$ growth (*TBD*)
- # of Attendees – *Grow paid attendees and tour operators taking appointments by 10 percent*
- ROI for attendees

**Strategies**

**Staff Engagement**

- Target messages to each segment to increase participation
  - Utilize AMS to create targeted messages
    - Create and implement membership target categories (using titles) to customize messaging for a more personalized experience
  - Utilize AMS to track member engagement and reward participating members
    - Employing gamification options and creating a point system that rewards with engagement opportunities
ABA’s Annual Meeting & Marketplace

Strategies, Cont.

→ Require Board members to actively engage and participate in the product show and encourage operator participation

Staff Engagement

→ Create panels/roundtables utilizing board members
  → Develop pre-show plan for board members to assist in marketing
→ Use testimonials from board members to promote the show
→ Require board members to work membership booth

→ Engage and attract the big 10 tour operators with individualized offers for each

Staff Engagement

→ Survey travel industry members to identify operators that they would like to see at ABA events
→ Set up personal calls/meetings with ABA’s CEO to encourage Annual Meeting & Marketplace attendance
→ Personally invite operators, pair with an ABA mentor and incentivize when appropriate

→ Create more reasons for manufacturers/suppliers to be at the Annual Meeting & Marketplace and grow the associate/equipment side participation to attract more operators

Staff Engagement

→ Create a robust one day exhibit show making ABA’s Annual Meeting & Marketplace a “must attend” event for operators
  → Re-examine RFP guidelines for timing/space
  → Draft budget that includes incentives and giveaways for associates
  → Examine associate full-week participation
ABA’s Annual Meeting & Marketplace

Strategies, Cont.

Staff Engagement

→ Create incentives for manufacturers to bring their operators and vendors
  → Meet with the manufacturers to determine appropriate incentives for their customers and themselves
→ Encourage manufacturers and vendors to meet at MKPL by providing appropriate space
  → Sell as sponsorship package and include product showcase time
→ Review BISC and BusMARC schedules to allow more educational opportunities and time on the floor
  → Conduct vehicle and vendor specific training on MKPL floor
  → Develop product showcase speaking events and use these as sponsorship opportunities
→ Operator exclusive special event along with educational offerings to draw more operators

Staff Engagement

→ Utilize council and BISC meetings as educational opportunities for operators
→ Focus on operational education by expanding the definition to include technology, sales/marketing, small business training outside of BISC and BusMARC meetings
→ Create and implement a certification program for bus owners that set them apart as a trustworthy industry leader
→ Hold education sessions on the floor that help drive the bottom line (business, insurance, financial, sales)
  → Conduct vehicle specific/vendor specific training at winter meeting
  → Develop product showcase speaking opportunities
→ Promote the appointment show and how the tour operation can enhance a bus company’s business
ABA’s Annual Meeting & Marketplace

Strategies, Cont.

→ Report on ROI and publicize this to attract additional travel participants

  Staff Engagement
  → Utilize post-marketplace research to capture sales and distribute information using a trusted third party
  → Employ Foundation research to help members justify their budgets and participation – ABA annually conducts an ROI study to measure the value members receive from Marketplace

→ Continue flexible pricing model

  Staff Engagement
  → BOGO for bus manufacturers/vendors
  → Maintaining competitive exhibit space pricing with other shows
  → Re-evaluate sponsorship program and pricing

→ Target value-added services e.g. buyers event for operators/equipment suppliers

  Staff Engagement
  → Create exclusive events for Buyers to network (not just breakfast)
    → Operator to operator sales options
    → Operator sharing sessions
  → ABA partners should have “show” specials and should be present at MKPL
    → Create engagement that programs that encourage operator booth attendance
ABA’s Annual Meeting & Marketplace

Strategies, Cont.

→ Partner with other shows/events; explore, determine best fit: reach out to their participants
→ Market the show to communicate the benefits to all target audiences

**Staff Engagement**

→ Utilize social media and communication department

→ Use technology to create mechanism for year around member-to-member engagement

**Staff Engagement**

→ MKPL webinars should only be for MKPL attendees
→ Create year-round access to operators who attend
  → Give attendees year round access to the MKPL complete research database
→ Utilize the “Marketplace App” all year
  → Consider an ABA App as the umbrella software application to help members connect year round
4. Strategic Objective: Support the work of the ABA Foundation

Targets for 2020

Strategies

→ Communicate the Industry’s impact using Foundation’s data to enhance the advocacy efforts and support membership

**Staff Engagement**

→ Create weekly #FoundationFriday Social Media posts – Foundation Fridays were an active part of the 2018 Auction activities

→ Blog monthly to highlight a Foundation project, Scholar, or ABA Foundation donor/sponsor

→ Brand ABAF Research to highlight recent studies and impact reports

→ Engage and inform the ABA Foundation Board of Governors more effectively through quarterly conference calls to update on the Foundation’s ongoing projects

→ Coordinate with Foundation on research initiatives that will support advocacy

**Staff Engagement**

→ Include ABA GAP and Communications staff members in regular meetings

→ In coordination with GAP develop specific research projects

*This strategic planning process was focused on ABA. The ABAF will conduct its own strategic planning exercise at a future date.*
Foundation

Strategies, cont.

→ Take a lead role in promoting and supporting fundraising efforts for research and scholarships

  **Staff Engagement**

  → Bolster the Foundation Scholarship program through mailing campaigns highlighting testimonials from student recipients – *The 2018-2019 scholarship participation was one of the highest to date*

  → Begin the outreach to current and past donors to fund specific research projects that benefit advocacy

→ Invest in staff to support research function

  **Staff Engagement**

  → Continue utilizing outside research firm
5. **Strategic Objective:** Communicate to the bus and travel industry about ABA, its members and destinations with tour products, best practices, trends, advocacy

**Targets for 2020**

- Members Satisfaction with ABA pubs – Will be sending a publications survey by the end of the year and have already reconstituted the Communications Committee to be an editorial board and ensure the right stories and messages are crafted
- Creating positive awareness, member engagement and advocacy
- Readership including web, circulation, etc.
- Advertising $ and net income *(TBD)*
- Outreach to mainstream and trades media
- Maintaining a balance between member information value and generating net income

**Staff Engagement**

The Strategy will be developed using core principles with added emphasis on relationships, partnerships, accountability and results:

- Focus on clear objectives and key audiences
- Cultivate partnerships with media, regulating agencies, and other associations in the transportation, travel and tourism industry – *Busing On The Lookout*
- Ensure even greater cooperation and sharing of best practices between the national association and state associations
- Develop qualitative metrics for tracking results and success – *The new database and email system can not track open rates and what people are reading*
Publishing, Communications and Social Media

Strategies

→ Maintain and deliver a portfolio including magazine, membership directory that add value
→ Where possible, create income from the communications/publications portfolio
→ Use/include all media channels including traditional print publications, digital and social media
→ Identify and create/source the right content to match member needs/interests to promote member awareness and engagement – Hired a new marketing associate to help craft messages
→ Support members with crisis communications – Helped 3 members since the beginning of 2018

Staff Engagement

→ Advocacy: Drive legislative and regulatory oversight framework at all government levels to eliminate obstacles and promote the success of our industry
  → Work with GAP on priorities and develop strategies built around them to enhance Advocacy’s impression on influencers
  → Promote GAP efforts through email and social media channels to inform and engage members in advocacy efforts
  → Collaborate with to GAP to create webpages that educates members, government officials and decision-makers 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
Staff Engagement

→ Membership

→ Continue overall membership growth with focus on all segments of the motorcoach, tour and travel industry

→ Work with membership team 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 utilizing hard mailings, emails, social media and other platforms to reach a larger audience of members and potential members – All efforts are being made to create a new campaign to reach and communicate with members that has an Amazon/personalized feel to members and prospects

→ Utilize social media campaigns to target audiences that are in the industry

→ Show how ABA promotes its members to consumers – Created Heros of the Industry where we promote member community service on the website and in Destinations
Publishing, Communications and Social Media

Staff Engagement

→ Annual Meeting & Marketplace – A twitter board was added at Marketplace this year to give members the ability to engage with the show and with each other upon arrival
  → Deliver the leading marketplace for member buying/selling
  → Work with Meetings to develop strategies and partnerships that help promote or market the Annual Meeting & Marketplace to a wider audience leading to increased 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 its value on social media channels and in 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.
Publishing, Communications and Social Media

Staff Engagement

ABA Foundation

- Work with Foundation team on strategies to best engage members on both the scholarship side and research side of priorities – Plans are to ramp up the scholarship promotion with a kit to members that will have cards, poster and other tools to engage their employees in applying for scholarships
- 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 needed 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 – Growing relationships with NEW media – Bloggers – while continuing to work with trade and mainstream media
Publishing, Communications and Social Media

Staff Engagement

- Publishing, Communications and Social Media, cont.

- Maintain and deliver a portfolio including online publications, magazine, membership directory that add value

- Utilize all media channels including traditional print publications, digital and social media to promote ABA, its membership and the industry's impact – Added TourStop in September 2017 to cater to and target travel members

- Create the right content to match member needs/interests to promote member awareness and engagement

- Provide media support to members dealing with a crisis
  - Contact or respond to all members involved in any form of crisis and offer to assist with their media efforts the media for them

- Grow social media channels members by engaging ABA members and potential members through advertisements, interesting posts and being responsive – Grew social media by 13 percent since December 2017

- Maintain a provocative website that serves as a resources for all things ABA and in the industry, encouraging them to stay on longer

- Promote ABA and benefits of membership to attract new members as well as engage current members across all media platforms
Publishing, Communications and Social Media

Staff Engagement

→ Resources & Tools

→ Leverage our members into a community that is readily available to respond to media inquiries as well as calls to action on Capitol Hill

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

→ Mobilize and utilize 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

→ Utilize a database of industry statistics as a resource library about the impact of the motorcoach, travel and tourism industry on the U.S. economy

→ Working Across the Network

→ Cultivate relationships and membership with the state associations so they are on board with our marketing and communication activities, as well as political grassroots

→ Maximize the benefits of working together across the country as we deliver this strategy, keeping in mind the unique characteristics of each individual state association as we deliver this strategy
Organizational Capabilities

6. **Strategic Objective**: Strengthen our financial position, the staff and the technology resources to enable ABA to achieve the objectives, serve members and thrive in the future

**Target For 2020**
- Return reserve levels – July 2010 (pre-move in to 111K) $4,604,322  April 2018 - $4,822,224
- IT member support capabilities achieve high level of internal satisfaction

**Key Strategies:**
- Continue to add to reserve levels with goal of achieving 12 months reserves to allow for ABA to continue operations if there is “0” revenue in a given year - $4.8 million is 75 percent of current $6.5 million in expenses
  - **Staff Engagement**
    - Transfer $100,000 each spring from ABA’s operating account to the reserve account – Completed in April
- Upgrade AMS and key IT capabilities to support needs of members and staff
  - **Staff Engagement**
    - Modernize financial tracking of activities related to membership and ABA annual meeting and marketplace – The current AMS system provides streamlined and accurate information between registrations, membership and accounting
- Hire/develop staff to achieve top tier ABA Sales and marketing team - Underway
- Review and update the governance structure: evaluate the pros and cons of having a larger board to help drive engagement and advocacy
  - **Staff Engagement**
    - Utilize ASAE and other organizations to create an optimal board size and structure
    - Fully engage the board through BusPAC giving, ABAF contributions and Congressional outreach
    - Insure that all membership segments are fully represented on the board
- Staffing up Foundation to support its objectives
  - **Staff Engagement**
    - Currently there is one full time staff member engaged in supporting the foundation – Shea and Brad
    - Retain additional support as needed for specific research projects