

Developing a Well-Oiled Network: Tools and Templates for Success

Each network leadership team should consider what they want to accomplish and memorialize their goals in a one to three-year strategic plan.

Strategic Planning Steps:

1. *Gather information.*
 - a. Review sample strategic plans from other networks (available on acc.com). Vice-Chairs should be especially cognizant of this, since they will eventually become Chairs and drive the process.
 - b. Solicit feedback from members and existing network leaders to help identify possible opportunities for more focused resources and attention.
 - c. Use an ACC survey tool, the data memos provided by ACC Staff, monthly calls, or the ACC Annual Meeting as a vehicle to obtain feedback from members regarding network priorities/projects, and to recruit leaders to help execute elements of the strategic plan after its developed.

2. *Discuss opportunities to help develop goals.*
 - a. Remember to include all the key stakeholders – network leadership, the network sponsors, and ACC Staff.
 - b. What do members really want from their ACC Network versus the other groups serving them?
 - c. What is our market niche and how can the network exploit this?
 - d. What services does the network currently offer its members, and is the network doing a good job delivering those services?
 - e. What is the relationship with the network sponsor? How can networks leverage this relationship to provide maximum value (programs, resources) to the members of the network?
 - f. What other relationships (competing or partner bar associations, staff liaisons, chapters, pro bono providers) could be cultivated to add value to the network?
 - g. Is there a theme you could work into the overall goal? This is particularly helpful for branding the network and helping to create a focus for the network.

3. *Prepare three to six preliminary goals to comprise the plan.*
 - a. It's important to focus on a few activities throughout the year. If the network develops too many goals, it becomes difficult to focus the leadership team and accomplish the objectives in the plan.
 - b. Try to have your goals finalized by the end of November. This will allow the network to start focusing on executing activities right away.
 - c. While defining goals, contact ACC for help with ideas regarding membership goals and initiatives. ACC staff can provide data, suggest resources, and develop materials to assist with executing the network's membership goal.

4. *Break down the preliminary goals to bite-sized goals.*
 - a. Your team should be coached into breaking down their goals to smaller deliverables, which are achievable on an agreed upon timeline. This will enable them to manage their workload in a timely manner, delegate to subnetwork members, or ask for help.

5. *Ensure accountability.*
 - a. Assign timelines and leaders with specific responsibilities for executing the plan. This offers a great opportunity to engage your subnetwork chairs.
 - b. The Litigation Network created a visual calendar that everyone could reference. It's helpful for keeping everyone on track.
 - c. Consider sending calendar invites with dates associated with plan deadlines.
 - d. Conduct a check in on the plan during each leadership call to ensure that assigned leaders are moving forward with the execution of plan elements.
 - e. Set up regular calls with the network sponsor to check in on resources and/or other initiatives where sponsor support is critical to the success of the network.
 - f. Publish the plan on the network webpage to ensure members know what the network's priorities are in the coming year.
 - g. And finally, report on the progress to your members every quarter. Rinse and repeat.

In addition to creating a strategic plan, the Financial Services Network employed the following tools to help the Network accomplish its goals:

1. Used the leadership interest form at the ACC Annual Meeting to help identify and recruit new leaders.
2. Developed a communications team with each chair responsible for executing a tactic of the communications strategy (i.e. one for LinkedIn, eGroup, website, and newsletter.)
3. Empowered subcommittees to create and complete their own goals
4. Developed a membership welcome letter template and membership update letter template.
5. Consistent produced agendas and minutes to ensure the leadership stays organized and members have effective communications.
6. Used "Trello" app to update action items and provide comments inbetween phone calls.
7. Developed Social Media Guidelines for LinkedIn.
8. Tasked the presenters with preparing a summary of all legal quick hit presentations along with a link to the recording of the program and posting it on LinkedIn.

In addition to creating a strategic plan, the Employment and Labor Law Network employed the following too tools to help the Network accomplish its goals:

1. Ensuring faculty are diverse in background and perspective.
2. Effective collaboration with chapters.
3. Creative and consistent use of subcommittees and niche practice area experts.
4. Involving members in network programming.
5. Partnering with ACC on Advocacy initiatives.
6. Working with ACC sponsors and HQ to improve and curate resources on employment topics.

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