ABA Communications & Marketing Board of Directors Report
Melanie Hinton/Fall 2020

Introduction:
After a successful Marketplace in Omaha, the Communications & Marketing team began promoting 2021 ABA’s Marketplace and Busworld North America in Baltimore. Then March came and COVID-19 with it. Gears shifted to 100 percent COVID-19 and the effects on the industry communications and media relations. The last six months have been devoted to promoting the industry to members of the press and Congress and communicating with our members how ABA is working for them and sharing their stories.

Strategic Plan Benchmarks and ABA Communications/Marketing Activities

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

Update:

- Promoting the GAP Team on Capitol Hill in social media.
- Working in sync with GAP team on promotion of the team’s work on COVID-19-related work.
- Sending 41 COVID-related alerts to ask membership to reach out to their Congressional delegation for help and support CERTS Act.
- Created COVID-19-focused website with Kyle DeVivo to house all relevant information on all administrative, legislative and regulatory actions. The site grew to include Motorcoaches Rolling for Awareness Rally and TourismStrong information.
- Sent 28 press releases and statements (as of Aug. 27) related to the need for Congress to deliver COVID economic relief to the industry.
- Helped organize and ran all media for the Motorcoaches for Awareness Rally on May 13. We garnered hundreds of media hits from our members local outreach as well as ABA and UMA.
- Ran a Letter to the Editor campaign in May with members regarding the effects of COVID on the industry and Congress leaving us out of the CARES Act.
  - Member-signed op-eds in Columbus Dispatch, Florida Sentinel, The Tennessean, Lansing State Journal, Washington Examiner

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

- Regularly and consistently promote what ABA offers its membership. Highlights of programs and services, include:
  - Advocacy - #ABAWorkingForYou
  - Crisis Communications Assistance
  - Marketplace
  - Discount Partnerships
  - Networking: Councils, Meetings, Webinars
  - Education: Marketplace Education, Webinars, Council Meetings, CTIS, Entry Level Driver Training, John Kennedy on Demand
  - ABA Foundation Scholarships and Research
  - Member Promotion: ABA Publications, Member Blogs, Promotional Social Media Pieces, Member Spotlight, Consumer-focused Promotion

- Communications produced five press releases to highlight ABA benefits, partnerships and provide how ABA is working for you.

- ABA Membership Chat on Buses.org and Marketplace Microsite. Continued High Volume on ABA Member Chat:
  - 1285 people have “chatted” with ABA
  - 271 new chat connections made.
  - Membership recruitment tool

- Created Postcards from the Road to promote members doing business. Has been very popular on social media.

- Created Open for Business for our travel members to promote that they are open for group tours and what their requirements are for sizes, etc. Has been well received by our travel members.

Marketplace: Deliver the leading marketplace for member buying/selling.
To help Meetings achieve their objective, Communications will:

Update:

- We had a successful Marketplace in terms of media coverage as well as social media interaction with and from members.
- Leading up to and during Marketplace, Marketplace Chair Luke Busskhol starred in a number of videos promoting the show.
- Plans for Marketplace 2021 are in development and ABA’s Comms team has been in close contact with Baltimore’s Marketing team.
- Daily and weekly promotion takes place in ABA’s publications.

ABA Foundation: Support the work of the ABA Foundation

- Announced the 2020-2021 Scholarship Winners
• Promoted ABA Foundation studies on the effect of COVID-19 on the industry.
• Continue to release quarterly motorcoach sales reports
• Currently promoting the 2019 motorcoach census survey.

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

**Update:**
• Created and continually update busesmoveamerica.com. Website includes sections:
  - Contact Congress
  - ABA Working for You
  - Recovery Toolkit
  - Facts Not Fear
  - Tourism Strong
  - Re-Opening Recommendations
  - Newsroom Resources

• Managed Taskforce for Cleaning Protocols and wrote report. Report included topics on:
  - Employee Care
  - Bus Maintenance & Cleaning
  - Customer Care
  - Incidents While on the Road
  - Emergency Evacuation Protocols
  - How to Communicate and Market Your Cleaning Protocols
    - Conducted two presentation on protocols with Terry Fischer (co-chair of the Taskforce): Connecticut Bus Association and BISC; and presented on how to market your protocols with NAMO

**Mainstream and Trade Media Engagement:** Position ABA as a leader and valued resource that the media can rely on for factual information on the industry, members as well as legislative and regulatory efforts that affect the industry.

**Update:**
**Media Engagement:**
So far in 2020, ABA has sent out 46 statements on COVID-19 effects on the Industry, Congressional action on COVID-19 and the Industry; Marketplace, Foundation research and scholarships, as well as ABA benefits and partnerships.

**Media Statements:**
**As of Aug. 27, 2020**

*As Hurricane Laura Barrels Toward Gulf, Motorcoaches Mobilize to Evacuate Citizens*

*Motorcoach Industry Thanks Sen. Susan Collins for Leadership in Efforts to Save Industry*
ABA Foundation Coach Builder Survey Shows Second Quarter Sales Decimated by COVID-19 Effect

ABA Welcomes House Bill to Help Decimated Industry

Associations Come Together to Urge Congress to Support CERTS Act

ABA Offers Discount on Member Dues Renewals

Tell Your Senators to Support and Co-Sponsor S. 4150, the CERTS Act

ABA Congratulates Successful FY 2020 Bus Security Grant Recipients

ABA Looks Forward to Introduction of the Coronavirus Economic Relief for Transportation Services Act

ABA Applauds Senators Proposal to Enable DMOs Access to SBA PPP Funds

ABA Publishes Sample Policies for Industry for Post-Pandemic Cleanliness and Safety Protocols

New ABA Foundation Report Estimates Industry Losing $11 Billion Despite Easing Travel Restrictions

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Peter Pantuso Letter to Membership on ABA Working For You

ABA Appreciates the House Taking Further Action to Assist Small Businesses But More Needs to be Done

ABA Statement on Motorcoach State Rally Next Week

ABA Thanks Congressional Supporters Committed to Helping the Industry Survive COVID-19 Pandemic

Peter Pantuso Letter to Membership on Motorcoach Rally

ABA Thanks House for Helping the Industry, But More Needs to be Done

America’s Motorcoach Industry Will Descend on Washington, D.C. on May 13 for a Rally for Awareness

As COVID-19 Crisis Lingers U.S. Motorcoach Industry Seeing Devastating Losses

ABA Says Adding Funds to Small Business Administration Program is Not Enough

ABA Convenes Industry Recovery Task Force

ABA Applauds the Congress on Relief, but They Missed the Bus

ABA Applauds Trump Administration for Delaying Real ID Deadline
The Startling Economic Facts about the Motorcoach, Group Tour and Travel Industry

When Disaster Strikes There May be No One Left to Help

Call Your Senators NOW! Tell Them to Save Our Industry!

Springtime in D.C. Looks A Lot Different This Year

National Bus and Motorcoach Associations Call on Congress to Act Immediately!

ABA Joins Essential Services Community’s Call Protect Businesses to Continue Operations

ABA Says Industry Will Lose $8 Billion during Next Five Months

Don’t Ignore a Major Strategic Part of the Transportation Industry

A Letter to Membership: ABA Is Here for You During This Time

ABA Cares: Information on Helping Those Affected by Nashville Tornado

How Can You Best Be Prepared for the Coronavirus and Influenza?

ABA Foundation 4th Quarter Motorcoach Sales Report Shows Smaller Buses in Demand

New Report Shows How Digital Technologies Will Shape the Charter Bus Industry

ABA Wraps Up a Successful Marketplace 2020

ABA Members Recognized with Prestigious Industry Awards during Marketplace

ABA, Busworld Sign Three-Show Agreement for Busworld North America

FMCSA Announces Preemption of California’s MRB Rules for Drivers of Passenger-Carrying CMVs

ABA Elects New Board Members During Annual Meeting

ABA Congratulates the CTIS Class of 2020

American Bus Association, USLAW NETWORK Team Up for Rapid Response, Legal Programming

Media Hits:

So far in 2020, ABA has been mentioned in 1,135 articles (giving a total media exposure of 4,923 results with a potential reach of 1.45 million) Publications that featured ABA and the industry include:

CNBC

Washington Post
ABA’s social media presence continues to grow.

**Facebook**: 5,772 (Dec. 11) to 7,460 (Aug. 27)

**Twitter**: 4,435 (Dec. 11) to 4,645 (Aug. 27)

**Instagram**: 1,286 (Dec. 11) to 1,536 (Aug. 27)

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

**United Motorcoach Association**
**Facebook**: 3,784 as of Aug. 27
**Twitter**: 1,625 as of Aug. 27
**Instagram**: 60 as of Aug. 27

**National Tour Association**
**Facebook**: 5,866 as of Aug. 27
**Twitter**: 10,600 as of Aug. 27
**Instagram**: 651 as of Aug. 27

In mid-March, ABA added a special e-newsletter to our offerings – The Coronavirus Update. These daily COVID-19 briefs ran daily from March 16 – June 4 in an effort to not inundate our members with constant emails but keep them up to speed on all news surrounding COVID and the industry.
Because of COVID-19 and business closures, ABA made the decision to go digital with Destinations magazine. The first digital issue went out in May. In July, we did a Back to Business supplement magazine, which was comprised of business building and marketing articles written by ABA’s Marketplace education speakers. We also move the annual Best of the Best issue, which was usually in the September-October issue to November-December. Destinations magazine will continue to go digital until we see an upward trend in advertising.

On September 1, YGS took back over the advertising sales of The Insider. For the past year and half advertising sales were run by a partner of InLoop, our Insider distributor. We moved advertising back to YGS so our advertisers would only have 1 point of contact for all of ABA’s publications.