ABA Communications Board of Directors Report

Melanie Hinton/Fall 2017

Introduction:

It has been a successful and busy fall for ABA Communications. We released a number of statements on Congressional and Administration actions such as tax reform, travel bans, etc. We also launched a brand new publication for our travel and tourism members. We continue to work with FMCSA and other transportation-related associations on the Our Roads, Our Safety Partnership and began partnering with TourOperatorLand.com to promote ABA member destinations in both the Insider and the e-newsletter INBOUND.

Our Roads, Our Safety Partnership

For nearly a year, ABA has been leading the charge on a partnership with FMCSA, ATA and AAA to promote as a surface transportation industry, safe driving on the roads around Commercial Motor Vehicles. We have been growing the partnership adding new transportation associations regularly.

ABA and our partners have been promoting the safety campaign on social media, our websites, our members and to the media. The initial report on the number of hits we all have generated has been positive. We have had more than 405,000 impressions and we have seen that the average time of people staying on the webpage has been 37 seconds (the length of the video). Our next video – Wide Turns – debuted in early September and the third video – Stopping Distance - was released in early December. We encourage you to share our social media posts on the campaign and utilize the materials on the FMCSA website.

We have welcomed the Owner Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA), the National American Fleet Association (NAFA), National Motor Freight Traffic Association (NMFTA), Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI) and the American Driver & Traffic Safety Education Association (they will be incorporating our videos and materials into their training modules.). The Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao has made this FMCSA’s number one safety campaign, so look for more materials, videos, events and signs in the top 10 states for traffic accidents.

We will start planning the next round of videos early in 2018, the partnership is considering creating videos on distracted driving, driving with pedestrians and bicyclists on the streets and driving with school buses on the road.

Government Affairs & Policy:

We have been quite busy on the legislative and regulatory side of the association. Early in the summer, ABA joined other travel industry associations to show support 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 has 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 have been busy utilizing the other days of the week to highlight our Council meetings, business appointments, networking and other advantages of ABA’s Marketplace on member businesses.

We have also been working closely with #ABACharlotte’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, this year we will be hosting a Twitter Board in the ABA lounge at the show that will show all the social media tweets happening during the show.

Membership:

During the Fall, the Communications team created targeted social media advertisements to promote the value of ABA membership. These ads were highly targeted focusing on east coast, west coast, travel and bus operators, resulting in:

Facebook: 31,040 impressions, reached 26,094 people, 15,209 video views

Twitter: 32,253 impressions

ABA also created a new web page under About Us on the website titled ABA Cares. This page was originally used to promote ABA’s partnership with Tourism Cares during the hurricane season to raise money for industry colleagues affected by hurricanes Irma and Harvey. In 2018, the page will switch over to promote ABA members corporate social responsibility activities: Heroes of the Industry.

ABA Communications team has also been active on social media promoting ABA member businesses and attractions through special “National Days” as well as other news worthy events.

Activities:

Media Engagement:

Between October and December, ABA sent out 10 statements and comments regarding government action as well as announcing Baltimore as the site for the 2021 ABA Annual Meeting & Marketplace.

Peter also did a number of interviews with Sirius XM’s Road Dog Trucker, Business View Magazine, Leisure Group Travel, Tourism Pros and USA Today.

Media Statements:

Since October, ABA has sent out 10 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.

ABA Announces the Formation of the Asian Motorcoach Council and School Bus Council
ABA Urges Consideration of Small, Family Businesses during Tax Reform

ABA Announces Baltimore as Site for the 2021 Convention

ABA Responds to Port Authority Bus Terminal Incident

ABA Expresses Concern over Supreme Court Ruling on the Administration’s Travel Ban

HMC Praised at NTSB Hearing

ABA Says America is Safe, Group Travel is the Best Way for Students to Enjoy America’s Landmarks

ABA Urges Senate, House Appropriators to Fund the Intercity Bus Security Grant Program for FY18

NPS Proposal Includes Drastic Fee Increase for Motorcoaches

ABA Foundation Report Says Motorcoach Manufacturing Sales Grew in Q317

Media Hits:

In the Driver’s Seat, Leisure Group Travel

American Bus Association to Host Annual Meeting in Baltimore in 2021, The Baltimore Sun

Tourism Pro Talks- Pete Pantuso of the American Bus Association, The AttractionsCoach.com

Cyclist Fatalities Addressed; Route Adherence Stressed, Crosstown Bike Lanes Suggested, Chelsea Now

DUI Conviction Not Enough to Get Bus Driver Banned from Job, Associated Press/NBC New York

Social Media Activities

We have been utilizing our social media channels more with the #ABAWorkingForYou campaign, highlighting our members with “National Days” each week and promoting the benefits of being a member of ABA as well as attending ABA events. This year we have been utilizing videos taken at ABA’s Annual Meeting & Marketplace to promote ABA’s Councils, meetings and ABA work in general. These videos have proved to be quite popular with followers. We also relaunched ABA’s Instagram page in August.

Because of our increase engagement and use of social media networks, we have seen our social media audience and interaction continue to grow:

Facebook: 4770 in Sept to 4868 (as of Dec. 28) We created a buzz campaign to reach 5,000 followers by Marketplace.

Twitter: 3807 in Sept to 3917 (as of Dec. 28)

LinkedIn: 3560 in Sept to 3568 (as of Dec. 28)

Instagram: 397 in Sept. to 440 (as of Dec. 28)

To put in context our competitors’ social media numbers are:
ABA’s Newest Publication: The Tour Stop

In September, we launched the Tour Stop, a newsletter sharing the latest news and happening in the travel and tourism industry. We have had a great response! Members are able to share events, job postings and other news with the rest of the industry. We look forward to growing the publication in 2018.

Entry-Level Driver Education

During the summer BISC meeting, ABA launched its Entry-Level Driver Education training program. This online theory course includes five modules that will help members train new drivers according to the criteria set out by FMCSA. Since launching the educational program, six companies have utilized this training program.

ABA will continue to promote the program to its members. Currently ABA offers the most affordable training program in the industry.

Crisis Communication

While we had a relatively quiet summer regarding bus accidents, ABA put forth a campaign to educate our bus and tour operator members about ABA’s Crisis Communications member benefit. We mailed a flier to members laying out what to do in a crisis. Melanie Hinton participated in two webinars focused on crisis communications and social media. ABA Communications also helped members prepare crisis communications plans as well as deal with customer service communications issues.

In 2017, ABA has assisted the following companies with Crisis Communication needs:

Storer Coachways (1/4-1/5)
Burlington Trailways (2/24)
Transportation Charter Services (5/5)
First Class Tours (5/9)
Werner Coach (5/15)
Miller Transportation (7/22-26)
Chicago Classic Coach (8/2)
ABA also provided “other” communications assistance to members during 2017 whether it was to help them create a crisis communications or deal with difficult customer service situations:

Easy Breezy Tours (10/5)
Rocky Mountain Transportation (9/16)
Premier Transportation (8/1)
Turner Coaches (7/28)