

## What Keeps You up at Night?

When this edition of TBN hits the newsstands, I will have been CASD's President for a meager 75 days. Even at the end of my tenure, I'll only have 365 days under my belt. Leading up to and during his or her term, the CASD president learns a lot about association management. Yet there is still a lot to know. Fortunately, my partner in crime is CASD's Executive Director, Bonnie Benitez. Bonnie is an attorney who has focused her career on association law and management. She's been at this for over 18 years. I've come to appreciate that proper association management is a complex, engaging task and Bonnie knows an incredible amount about it.

A properly run association meets the current needs of its members, while drawing on its members to anticipate and plan to meet their future needs. One way to look at the role of an association is to consider the question: what, as members of the profession served by the association, keeps us up at night? Answering that question and striving to provide programs to address the answer is the role of an association. The challenge is always there and always changing. For those of us who have been at this awhile, just think about how much the practice has changed. An association like CASD must change along with the times.

While an association should chart a steady path into the future, it must do so while addressing the idiosyncrasies and goals of each new president while accounting for the ever-changing demands of its members. A good Executive Director learns the idiosyncrasies of a new president. Working together, the relationship offers a whirlwind of ideas and opportunities within the practicalities of a small nonprofit organization.

So what is an association? At its core, an association is a group of people who voluntarily come together to solve common problems, meet common needs, and accomplish common goals. Associations are unique forms of corporate animals. They are not businesses offering a product or service, and although tax exempt, are not charitable organizations serving a societal cause. Associations are unique because the owners and those that are served are the same. The association members are both the customers and the workforce of the organization, organized to advance the interests of its members. There are over 100,000 associations in the U.S.

In its 55th year, CASD has grown from a small social organization to the leading source of connection and education for plaintiff attorneys in San Diego County. CASD has been an integral part of the fight to defend the civil justice system against constant attack by foes much larger and more powerful than our members, and certainly more powerful than the clients we serve.

This year our Board of Directors is reexamining our mission statement, creating a vision for the association's future and enumerating the core values we seek to embody and promote. Doing this forces us to focus on the current and anticipated needs of our members. Our board is a working board. Each member serves on multiple committees and, with the assistance of the CASD staff and our other members, provides the services we believe CASD members need and want to be successful in representing people.

Even at 55 years, CASD is evolving, growing and refining. If we were to stop doing so, we would begin to atrophy. As a growing association, we must continually strive to master our environment and provide impeccable service

by Timothy Blood, CASD President and  
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to our members. As volunteer leaders of the organization, it is the job of the board to bridge the gap between the day-to-day work the association requires and the strategic and visionary thinking needed to adapt the association so it can be the best it can be in service of our members. During our brief term of service, we work to maintain sound fiscal policy and practices and realistically face the financial ability of the organization to support its programs. We are committed to strategically plan for the long-term future of the organization, and weigh all decisions in terms of what is best for those who are served by the organization - the members. We also work to foster important relationships with other organizations, whether those other organizations serve the plaintiff's bar, the defense bar or the courts.

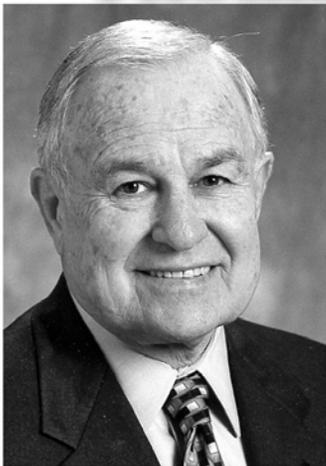
Our primary capital is human. As a member of CASD, take advantage of the opportunity to participate with

us as we continue CASD into the future. If you have, or want to develop leadership experience, get involved. Member engagement is central to CASD's success, which, in turn, is essential to the success of your colleagues.

One of the ways we can ensure that we are meeting the needs of our members is by coming to you and asking the important questions. So tell us what keeps you up at night. What are the two or three major challenges or opportunities you will face in your practice in the next year? Tell us about an educational program you attended that was fabulous and how it made a difference in your ability to serve your clients. Throughout the year you will be receiving short, bite-sized surveys asking questions like these. We hope you already view CASD as your professional home. With your input we can continue to move the organization in the direction that meets your needs. Whether

you are just starting out or are a seasoned pro, I hope you participate in and rely on the association, its staff, its volunteer leaders, and your fellow members as your primary source of help when you need it. After all, this is CASD. Never stand alone. **TBN**

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