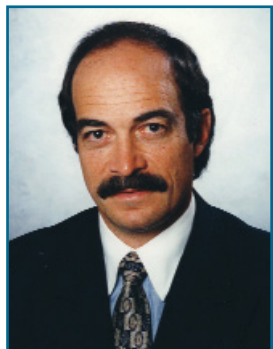


Technology Facilitates Participation in Volunteer and Leadership Roles



With the influx of new technologies, it has become possible for busy practitioners to communicate and assume leadership roles within the Academy. As Chair of the Board of Governors and a member of the Academy's leadership, technology has been a lifesaver. It has helped me perform my daily commitments and tasks efficiently. While email has become my primary mode of communication, it has not replaced face-to-face meetings or telephone conferences. According to a *New York Times* article, email remains the most popular online application with more than 6.1 billion messages sent daily. I have constant, and sometimes immediate, communication with the Board of Governors Executive Committee and staff to discuss issues as they arise.

The BOG uses email to conduct polls, to discuss issues that may need to be brought to the attention of the Academy's leadership, to review materials, and to disseminate information to the BOG representatives. Large committees can be kept abreast of each member's response by sending a copy to the entire group.

An example of the benefits of email are our electronic legislative alerts. They have been helpful in mobilizing various local constituencies to communicate with their state legislators as in the recent cases in New York and Vermont. In New York, more than 800 members were alerted about the expansion of dentistry scope-of-practice and were urged to contact their legislators to oppose the measure. We lost no time—the email communication was swift, concise, and immediate. The response was positive and efforts to defeat the measure were gratifying.

Electronic communication is successful only if the majority of the group is online. We recommend 100 percent email participation within the BOG, and my goal is to encourage 100 percent email communication within the Academy membership. During a recent visit to South Africa and also while on a cruise in the Caribbean, I was in touch and in control utilizing the wonder of email technology. One can be in contact from any location in the world at the price of a local phone call. Electronic communication demands prompt response in order to be effective.

It is important to note that technology should be embraced to enhance, not replace, existing tools. For instance, I communicate via telephone on a weekly basis with the director of the Board of Governors, Florence Freeman, to discuss issues from leadership calls that need follow-up and determine strategies for furthering our agenda. I also communicate via conference call with the Academy leadership weekly to address issues that arise. The BOG executive committee has conference calls to discuss issues, has two meetings each year, and the BOG publishes a quarterly newsletter, "Headlines." Minutes of committee meetings, "Headlines" newsletter, and BOG program information are all available via our web page. However, was it not for the use of email, my role as a leader would have been more cumbersome and time-consuming.

Technology can appear daunting, but as with anything new it becomes rather simple with repeated use. Most importantly, we must not forget that technology has helped save resources such as physician and staff time, fax, print and mail costs. These savings and the ease of use have helped embrace these new tools.

As the Academy moves forward with an upgraded web page, many new communication tools will be available for us. I look forward to using these new tools to further the work of the Board of Governors and the Academy.

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