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ABA RULE OF LAW INITIATIVE

# Outreach & Communications news

Hello Anita,

In recent months representatives from three different divisions have come to the Outreach and Communications Team, all faced with the same situation. Some are excited and positive, others are fearful and frantic, but **they've all been told the same thing by donors: ABA ROLI needs to do a better job of telling its story.**

In one case, the charge from a donor was clear and specific: "We want you to publicize the activities associated with grant X more." Some donors have said, "I love when we meet and I get to hear about people this program has impacted—why don't I see these stories on your webpage?" Still other donors have wondered, "ABA ROLI does terrific work, but why are you guys so under-the-radar? No one knows about you and what you're doing."

While this can be disheartening to hear from those we want to think we are terrific, it is wake-up call. We all know that we are executing top-tier programs—and we hope our donors know it, too—but **the reality is that simply achieving the activities laid out in the work plan does not make donors think we are better than our peer organizations.** Whether U.S. government, foreign government, foundation or individual, donors like it when organizations not only execute the work plan, but also demonstrate impact—it makes them (the donors) look good.

**We can make donors look good by showing that they chose wisely, by providing engaging content they can use on their own websites, and by getting the international development world talking about us and our work (and by extension, our donors).** While our communications environment is not as open as we might sometimes like, in reality there are a number of ways in which we can share our work with donors, partners, subject matter experts, beneficiaries and those simply interested in efforts that contribute to a more just world.

We can do a better job of utilizing our website, our Facebook page, our YouTube channel and our print publications more frequently, more effectively and, yes, more passionately. We can also do a better job of tracking and quantifying certain elements of our work. For example, how many local partners do we currently have? Probably hundreds, and that is impressive. How many lawyers and judges do we train annually? Surely thousands, which is equally impressive.

In this issue of Outreach News, I share more about our online tools and about how we can better maximize our communications efforts.

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## External Resources:

- [Motivating through stories](#)  
*Communications Network*
- [Weaponize your message](#)  
*FastCompany*
- [Thinking critically about performance](#)  
*Humanity United*
- [Taking photos in sub-optimal conditions](#)  
*International Association of Business Communicators*
- [Ensuring photos are usable](#)  
*Chronicle of Philanthropy*

I hope you find it helpful,  
Anita

*Anita Denning*  
*Outreach and Communications Director*

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## Digital Services Renaissance

For many years, the ABA ROLI *Update* was regarded as the premier digital offering. But times have changed. While the e-newsletter still boasts 3,000 subscribers and an industry-standard 12% open rate, we reach many, many more people by using the website and our Facebook page to push out content.

Earlier this year, the ABA ROLI website ([www.abarol.org](http://www.abarol.org)) underwent a redesign and a migration to a new backend system. I encourage you to take a few minutes to explore the new site, which includes several innovative features, including a dedicated newsroom, searchable publications, more dynamic video, greater use of photos and the ability to cross promote content both by region and thematic area. Since the migration, we are averaging 9,500 unique visitors monthly and 24,000 page views each month. We expect that number to rise exponentially as Google relearns our links and users update their bookmarks.

We currently have just over 1,200 Facebook likes. Each time we post a story, it reaches more than 1,000 Facebook users within a week—this is three times the impression rate of *Update*. In any given week, roughly 20 people talk about ABA ROLI to their Facebook friends. And this audience is overwhelmingly more international and younger than our website audience. While a third are from the United States, we have significant audiences in the Philippines, Azerbaijan and Egypt. Mexico, the Netherlands, Pakistan and South Africa are represented, among more than a dozen other countries. Nearly a third of our Facebook fans are between the ages of 25 and 34.

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## Make an impression with coordinating materials

The 2012 Program Book is now available, and it should only be given to those stakeholders who are likely to net a high return on that \$11 apiece investment. This means donors, prospective donors and highly-placed individuals we want to know about our great work. Equally impressive, but less expensive, are our one-pagers for each country program, for each thematic area and for our impact stories. Electronic versions of these, as well as an [email-ready version of the program book](#), are available at: <I:\LIBROLI\CostCenter\Outreach\One-pagers\2012>.

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## Resources

Motivating through stories | [Why we care and why we don't](#)

In this webinar by the Communications Network, experts talk about why numbers numb, why stories stick, and what you can do with this knowledge, especially if you want to get people to act.

Weaponize your message | [Why storytelling is the ultimate weapon](#)

In this article by FastCompany, experts argue that humans simply aren't moved to action by "data dumps," dense PowerPoint slides, or spreadsheets packed with figures. People are moved by emotion.

Thinking critically about performance | [Humanity United Case Study](#)

In this online annual report, Humanity United (a current donor) not only presents its work and development facts in a way that are simple and digestible, but it also uses its annual report to think critically about its areas of strength and its areas in need of improvement, making the organization seem forthright and genuine and spurring service to their mission.

Taking photos in sub-optimal conditions | [Beyond Automatic: Tips on low-light photography](#)

In this article from the International Association of Business Communicators, an expert provides tips on taking photos in less-than-optimal situations. See also: [Don't be afraid of the dark](#)

Ensuring photos are usable | [The importance of thinking big](#)

In this Chronicle of Philanthropy blog post, the writer discusses photo size and its importance. See also: [How great photos can tell a charity's story](#).

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