

Ten Pro Bono Tips

Ten Years Later

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Adapted from ABA Pro Bono Exchange

Oct. 1993

(Copy attached)

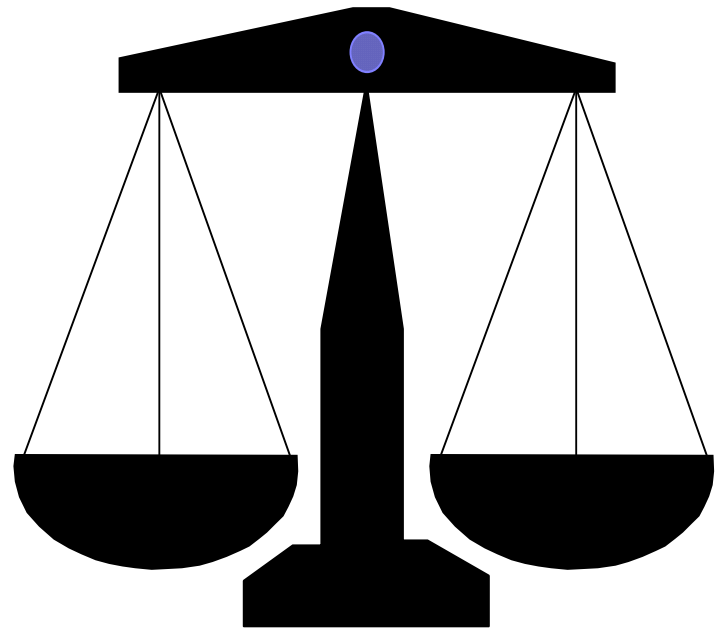
In organizing a pro bono program, ABA provides the following pointers (some of which I amended).

1. Be Realistic About the Types of Cases Pro Bono Attorneys Will Take

If you know lawyers won't take a **certain type of cases**, don't waste time recruiting and training them.

Q: How do we balance this issue with our dire need in **Family Law**?

- Many attorneys won't take Family Law matters.
- Can we find other cases for them?
- Can we design another structure for them (like Custody Clinics)?



2. Case Screening -- Be Honest & Organized

- Be honest about the amount of time cases may require.
- Prepare & organize information during the intake process to pass on to pro bono lawyer.
- **The easiest way to loose a volunteer is to send them a mess.**
- If **copies of files** are needed from the courthouse, send a volunteer law student to get the files before giving case to pro bono attorney.
- Don't even try to give out cases with tight time-frames (*10 business days is my policy*).

3. Clarify Expectations

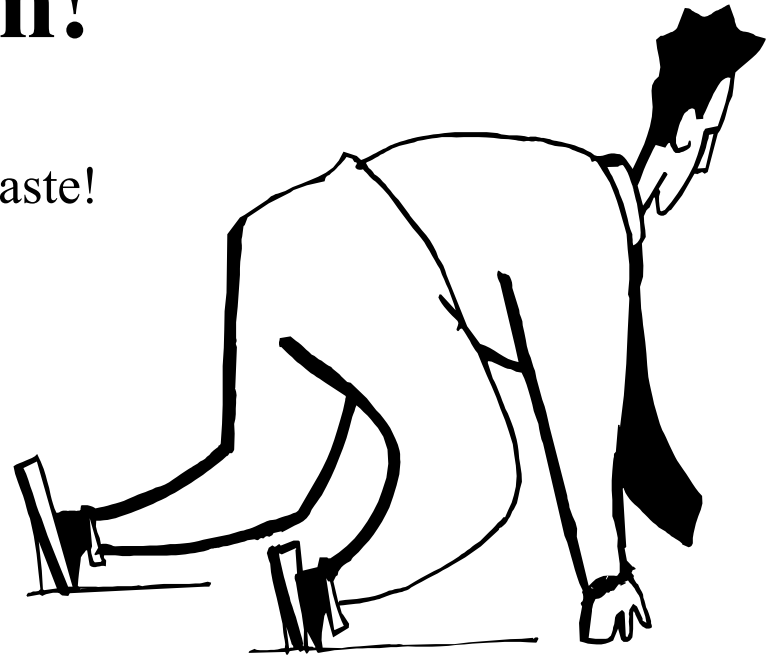


- If volunteers know what to expect, they won't be *unpleasantly* surprised.
- Plan for volunteer training & staff support.
- Offer mentors (Legal Aid or volunteers).
- Distribute written guidelines & handbook.

4. After Getting Volunteers, USE Them ASAP

Use 'em or Loose 'em!

- Don't let enthusiasm or training go to waste!
- If you don't use volunteers right away,
 - Looks like you don't need help!
 - You look disorganized.
- Get volunteers started ASAP.
 - Assign cases at the training, or
 - In the week after they volunteer.



5. Make the Volunteer Experience Real

- For example, dealing with clients with AIDS usually opens up volunteer's hearts and results in difficult (but extremely rewarding) experiences.
- *I am not really sure what this means.*
- Allow volunteers to see how the legal issues affect the clients' lives.
- Let volunteers see the difference they make.

6. Recognize Volunteers

Examples:

- Thank you letters from the Bar President.
- Thank you letters from client.
- Periodic volunteer listings in Bar publications.
- **What do you do?**
- *However, don't spend excessive time & resources on recognition & don't do it at the expense of volunteer training and other priorities.*
- Tough Call

7. Review Program Regularly

5 year/50,000 cases Checkup - Every 5 years, bring in a committee of committed Bar leaders to give program a fresh look.

- **Don't be afraid** to let others take a look under the hood.
- Encourage **staff** to welcome the opportunity to get advice from others.
- Regular checkups can **avoid serious** systemic problems.
- Use program review as an opportunity to get the Bar more involved & learn more about the need for pro bono (win-win)

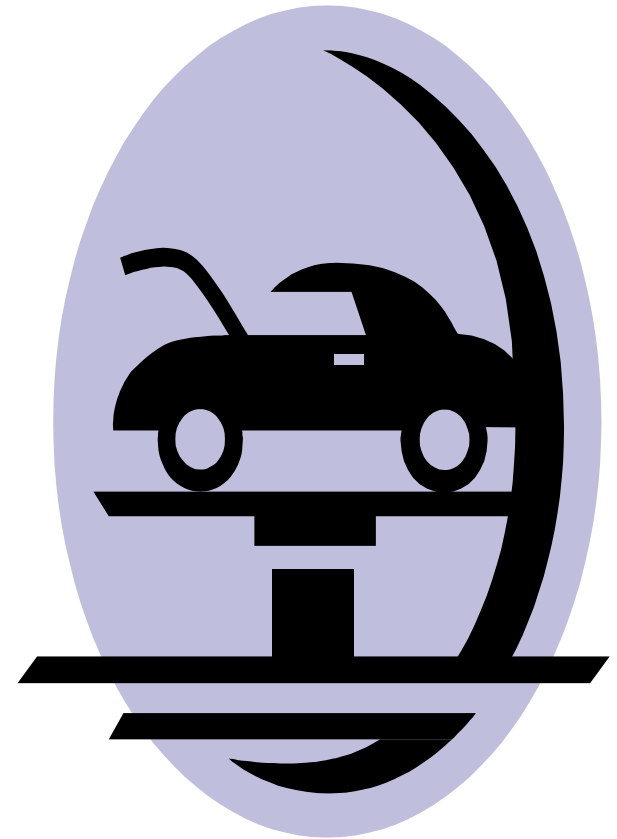
Annual Inspection - Review priorities once a year.

- Are your delivery methods cost-effective?
- Do you evaluate data to set priorities?

Front-end Alignment - Stay aligned with your mission & goals.

- Decide what you **want** to do, and
- Decide what you **can** and **cannot** do.

Keep Good Records -- To make reviews meaningful, keep good records.



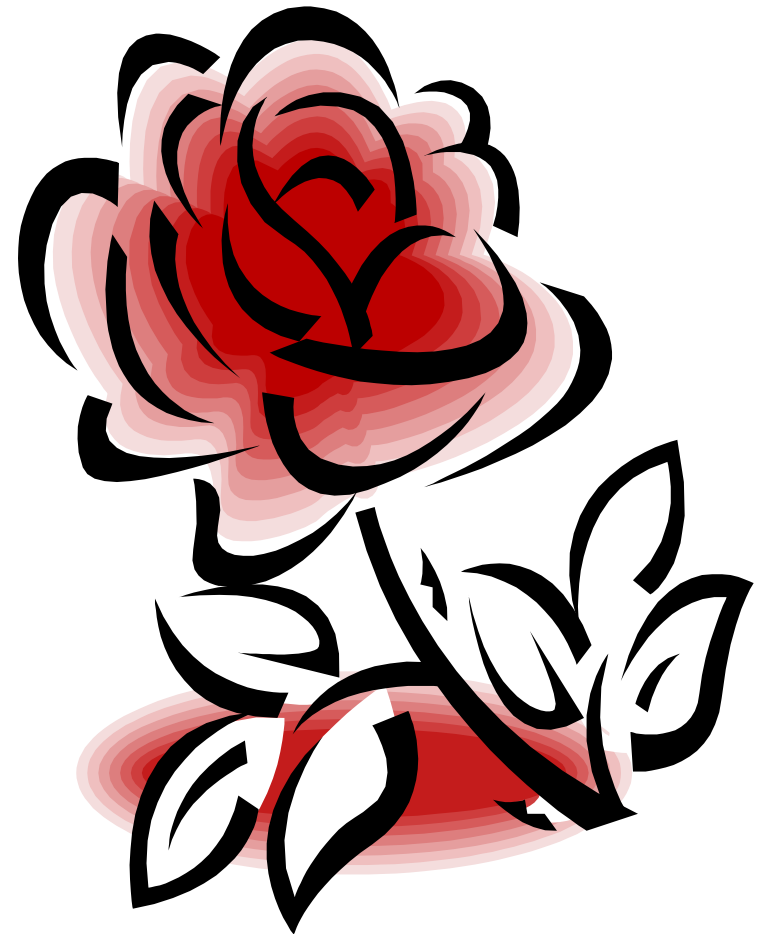
8. Think “Glamorous” Projects

- Try to match established priorities with glamorous projects.
- Helps attract \$ & volunteers.
 - Grants require gizmos.
- Helping kids is always more attractive to volunteers and donors than, say, convicted felons.



9. Rethink Marketing Approach

- Not always effective to pitch pro bono as “lawyering for poor people”.
- Might be better to talk about “volunteering” to encourage both taking cases and giving \$.
- A rose by any other name ...
- We use the term “expectations”
 - *Replaced the word “volunteer” with “pro bono participant.”*



10. Volunteer Hours Multiply Dollars.



Emphasize that volunteer hours help stretch limited legal services dollars.

Thanks to pro bono programs, we can produce \$10X worth of legal services for every “X” number of donated dollars.

Thus, the staff time & \$ spent on pro bono are efficiently multiplied.

Funders like to hear this.

11. Don't Re-invent the Wheel

- Use the listserve.
- Share your problems and ideas with others.
- Plagiarism with permission...!

