

## HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE SOA

### A Report from the Board of Governors

by Teresa Winer

As a member of this section and professional association, you are important to the whole SOA organization. With the growth and myriad of changes at the SOA over the years, some may feel the organization is not listening and is overly bureaucratic. Even for an insider getting our voice heard can be frustrating. The strategic planning process and change from a practice-based organization to a section-based one has taken quite a bit of time and effort; now issues and volunteer management systems are being put in place to carry out the plan, and those efforts will pay off for all of us.

I am glad to report that our new organizational structure, with its Issues Advisory Council (IAC), will offer us an organized way to get issues to the forefront, and will be able to parcel and portion your ideas and initiatives to the appropriate areas. This structure will be more fair and unbiased in the long run, as the IAC will not advocate the issues but will look at them from a strategic perspective. The goals of the strategic plan set forth by our Board of Governors will be considered, as well as cost/benefit analyses. A more disciplined ROI process for major planned programs and improvements will be necessary to best use SOA revenues and resources.

An “issues identity document” is in the works so that members will be able to present issues online, facilitating two-way communication so members can make suggestions in more ways. The IAC will then consider the potential pathways for a particular issue based on the content and scope. The Board is responsible for identifying and setting direction for “mega issues,” so not all responsibility is delegated to the IAC. However, Board time is limited, so a Board-level review will depend on the scope and specifics of each issue and whether the issue is already being handled by other committees.

The SOA seeks a better understanding of members and their satisfaction levels, but at the same time is becoming more focused on what is happening in a broader context. One example is that we are working with the Casualty Actuarial Society on Enterprise Risk Management and similar issues to make sure we have a presence in the greater non-traditional business environment.

There are many ways to get your voice heard, starting with SOA surveys. All members and candidates are asked to participate in a survey every three years. The results and trends are reviewed and taken to heart by the Board members. The 2005 survey has been studied and much discussed, and actions have been taken on many of the issues raised. In addition, there are other targeted surveys by sections, which can differentiate your concerns and give the Board a better understanding of what you want and need. And the CRUSAP task force has recently conducted a large survey that provided another chance for you to provide feedback on the profession.

Even though our surveys have a better response rate than many other associations (37 percent for members and 30 percent for candidates in 2005), a lot of voices are still not being heard when surveys are not filled out. Comments are reviewed and improvements are being made based on survey results, so it is important to participate, and you can make a difference. Spring 2008 will be the next time for the SOA member and candidate survey, so please take advantage of that opportunity.

Meanwhile, if you have feedback or ideas, don't wait for 2008! Communication is a two-way street. As a small consulting section member, you have special needs and problems. Please take the initiative to communicate and make your voice heard by reaching out to those on leadership teams within the SOA. You can contact your section chair or other council members, who can pass on information and/or put you in contact with the best person to get your issues heard and resolved at the next level. Better yet, get involved by volunteering. You recently received an e-mail asking for interest in section council leadership, and there is always a need for volunteers on committees and task forces. Check the SOA Web site to see more of what this section is about, various committees that exist, and other areas to volunteer. Pick up the phone, send an e-mail, and feel free to contact committee chairs about your concerns.

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