

August 3, 2007

Dear NABJ Member:

The National Association of Black Journalists officially releases its Strategic Plan 2007-2012 today. It has been 10 years since the organization has produced a strategic plan. This plan addresses the far-reaching changes within the current media landscape, how NABJ will grow and prosper as an organization, as well as how NABJ will help its members amid the changes.

Larry Olmstead and partners from Leading Edge Associates provided services over the past 9 months by digesting surveys and notes and conducting numerous conference calls to engage various audiences. Data was collected from scores of NABJ leaders, members, former officers, chapter presidents, media executives, potential donors and executives. The Strategic Plan Task Force, consisting of Sarah Glover, Raschanda Hall, Gregory Lee, Ray Meteyor and Adrienne Samuels, was instrumental in providing feedback and direction.

The Plan consists of six strategic goal areas for the association to focus itself over the next five years: customer service, training and educational opportunities, advocacy, membership, finances, and fund development. Each goal area contains various action steps that support the goal area. For example, under membership, one action steps reads:

- NABJ will significantly increase member services available online including training and other information about doing journalism across media platforms.

The NABJ Staff, Board of Directors, membership and chapters will all play a role in carrying out the plan. The Board and executive director will set a timeline with regard to prioritizing the plan's goals. The Board will be engaged in the various workings of the plan. The executive director will report to the Board at the quarterly meetings with regard to the association's progress on the plan's goals, action steps and directives.

A special session is scheduled during the 32nd Convention & Career Fair for Saturday, Aug. 11 at 11:00 a.m. to discuss the plan. We invite you to attend. If you have comments or suggestions, please feel free to send them to nabj@nabj.org We look forward to seeing you in Las Vegas during the convention.

Sincerely,



Bryan Monroe
NABJ President



Sarah J. Glover
NABJ Secretary
2007-12 Strategic Plan Chairwoman

2007 - 2012

NABJ
STRATEGIC
PLAN

Presented:
August 11, 2007
32nd NABJ Convention
Las Vegas

This plan was prepared by Leading Edge Associates of San Jose, CA. To complete this project, Leading Edge reviewed a draft plan prepared last year by NABJ leadership. It looked at input from a membership survey and interviewed six dozen board members, former officers, chapter presidents, media executives, potential donors and executives of allied associations. Leading Edge then met with the full NABJ board to get its input and finalize the goals.

Special thanks to NABJ President Bryan Monroe; Executive Director Karen Wynn Freeman, and the Strategic Plan Committee, consisting of Sarah J. Glover (chair), Raschanda Hall, Gregory Lee, Ray Metoyer and Adrienne Samuels.

VISION

By 2012, news media in the United States will cover black people and black perspectives worldwide in a way that is accurate, authentic, respectful of our culture and heritage, and representative of our numbers and influence in American culture, politics and society.

NABJ exists to improve media coverage of the black condition in the United States and worldwide. It is a tireless advocate for employment and advancement opportunities for its members, and actively seeks to provide resources to black journalists that allow them to further their careers. NABJ monitors media coverage, facilitating the accurate, authentic portrayal of blacks and pushing for improvement and change when warranted. NABJ never hesitates to “speak truth to power” when upholding the values of the organization and the interests of its members.

STRATEGIC GOALS 2007-12

- 1.** NABJ will be indispensable to its members. They will receive first-class customer service from staff during normal business hours, and have access to resources on the web 24/7/365.
- 2.** NABJ will dramatically improve members’ access to training and other resources so that black journalists are better equipped to navigate their careers amid the changing media landscape.
- 3.** NABJ will be a central actor in the dialogue about where media is headed in the 21st century. Its members will be at the forefront of the world’s most important stories.
- 4.** NABJ membership will grow to at least 5,000 by the end of 2009, aided significantly by a 50 percent improvement in annual rate of retention of professional members.
- 5.** NABJ will gain a reputation as a well-managed not-for-profit association with strong financial controls.
- 6.** NABJ will significantly expand its funding base through creative sales efforts and a broad, cohesive development strategy.

DISCUSSION & ACTION STEPS

GOAL ONE: NABJ will be indispensable to its members. They will receive first-class customer service from staff during normal business hours, and have access to resources on the web 24/7/365.

Discussion:

A theme heard frequently during the planning process was that, while black journalists know about NABJ and respect and treasure its legacy, many see it as less than essential to their day-to-day lives and careers. For many members, we were told, “NABJ is a convention” – it receded in the minds of members during the rest of the year. This view is held particularly among mid-career journalists. To be seen as essential, NABJ must continue to deliver a strong convention. But it also must step up its advocacy role; communicate more frequently and effectively with members to better understand their needs, and deliver services round-the-clock via the web.

Action Steps:

- NABJ will create more interactive opportunities – via the web, pulse surveys and two-way communication from leaders and staff – to understand membership needs.

- NABJ staff will adopt and monitor standards of customer service, including prompt response to phone calls, e-mails and member requests.
- NABJ will create original research each year that, in a highly visible way, advances the cause of diversity in media.
- NABJ will step up public statements on the key journalism/media issues of the day.
- NABJ will create or expand online archives that capture the history and legacy of the organization.
- NABJ will provide resources that support creation of journalism and business opportunities for diverse audiences.
- NABJ will expand international outreach to international members.

GOAL TWO: NABJ will dramatically improve members’ access to training and other resources so that black journalists are better equipped to navigate their careers amid the changing media landscape.

Discussion:

There is growing concern that this period of transformation in the media industry might negatively affect minority representation. Journalists need new skills to operate across media platforms, and new motivation and inspiration to build careers in workplaces that are undergoing change – particularly given that, in times of transformation, companies might shortchange training, staff development and diversity. NABJ must address this issue forthrightly to fulfill its service obligation to members and to be seen as relevant to external constituencies.

Action Steps:

- NABJ will develop a comprehensive training strategy that will upgrade the Media Institute and create the availability of professional development 24/7 through the establishment of online classrooms. This strategy will pay particular attention to training needs of mid-career journalists.
- As often as possible, NABJ will partner with existing organizations, particularly training institutes, to provide professional development services to members. This will expand NABJ’s reach and base of resources, and ensure it is not “reinventing the wheel” in a costly and inefficient manner.
- NABJ will seek innovative ways (not just job fairs) to connect members to job opportunities, especially in the interactive arena.

GOAL THREE: NABJ will be a central actor in the dialogue about where media is headed in the 21st Century. Its members will be at the forefront of the world’s most important stories.

Discussion:

NABJ is known internally and externally as a strong advocacy organization. Some want NABJ to speak out more frequently in a timely and proactive manner. A more significant issue, perhaps, is that as media has gone through a period of transformation – a transformation that has cost many black journalists their jobs, or motivated them to seek other careers – NABJ has been largely invisible in the public discourse.

NABJ members must be in the middle of important journalism in increasing numbers, and in the middle of the debate about the future of media. To do so is to stay true to the mission and legacy of the organization. It also is vital if NABJ is going to help keep members in the business and if NABJ is going to be seen as an essential organization for professional journalists.

Action steps:

- The NABJ president and other officers will maintain open and active lines of communication with industry executives. They will engage in public and private discussions about the future of the industry, advocating the interests of members and of fair and balanced coverage of the black condition.
- NABJ will continue to pursue constructive alliances with like-minded groups that share common interests, including the UNITY alliance.
- NABJ will step up recognition of high-achieving black journalists, through its website, publications and awards programs. NABJ will also step up recognition of media organizations and executives who do work consistent with the association's goals and programs.
- Whether in public venues or behind the scenes, NABJ will encourage media organizations to support the assignment of talented black journalists to major stories and high-profile roles.
- NABJ will seek to establish its own journals, publications and broadcast shows as platforms for outstanding coverage of the black condition and discourse about the future of journalism – and as potential sources of revenue for the organization.

GOAL FOUR: NABJ membership will grow to at least 5,000 by the end of 2009, aided significantly by a 50 percent improvement in retention of professional members.

Discussion:

NABJ has struggled to retain its professional members, but the next three years – with the national convention in Las Vegas in 2007, Tampa in 2009 and UNITY 2008 in Chicago – should bring significant growth opportunities. The key will be retaining the new members.

Action steps:

- Staff will deliver impeccable, relentless, efficient customer service. By the end of 2007, the executive director will deliver to the board a set of customer service goals, a timetable for achieving them and the measures that will be used to assess effectiveness and accountability.
- Financial and other incentives will be considered for membership renewals.
- NABJ will increase member services available online significantly including training and other information about doing journalism across media platforms.
- NABJ board and staff will design and implement a membership drive aimed at achieving the goal of 5,000 members.
- NABJ will increase the number of international members.

GOAL FIVE: NABJ will gain a reputation as a well-managed not-for-profit association with strong financial controls.

Discussion:

NABJ has been challenged by financial hurdles. The financial crises that emerge every few years affects NABJ's credibility with all constituencies.

Action Steps:

- NABJ will hire a skilled finance manager, and consider hiring a manager for fundraising.
- NABJ will deliver a comprehensive orientation for the board of directors so directors are clear on their duties and responsibilities.
- The board will allow the executive director more latitude in the day-to-day operations of NABJ, and hold her accountable for those operations.

- NABJ will invest in such training and development of staff that is necessary to improve the overall level of skill and professionalism.

GOAL SIX: NABJ will significantly expand its funding base through creative sales efforts and a broad, cohesive development strategy.

Discussion:

NABJ has focused relatively little on building a significant donor base outside of media organizations and a few companies that can be counted on at convention time. The potential is huge. NABJ's membership is seen as a valued and unique asset. There are many potential donors who would want to be identified with NABJ's mission of fair and equal media coverage, and with those people who produce authentic stories about the black condition. Finally, NABJ can do more to tap its own membership for financial support.

Action Steps

- NABJ will establish an "advisory board" or "President's Circle" of distinguished veteran members and allies to approach potential donors and to provide general counsel to the president and board.
- The board will increase its oversight of fundraising/development through establishment of a board committee in this area.
- NABJ will immediately begin contacts with outside firms that can assist in building a fundraising strategy and making donor contacts.
- NABJ will establish relationships with non-media entities to broaden its donor base.
- Staff will explore ways to market NABJ products and services in an effort to create new revenue streams.
- NABJ will explore a major donation campaign among veteran members, including legacy gifts.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The NABJ Board and staff will consider effective implementation of this plan to be the organization's highest priority. The organization will display the plan on its website and invite member comment and feedback.

Upon board approval, President Monroe and Secretary Glover will sign a letter to be sent to each member summarizing the main points of the plan. They will invite members to read the plan in its entirety online, and urge members to support the plan and NABJ. Regional directors will send letters to chapter presidents expressing their support for the plan. Directors should mention specifics: "In particular, I support the idea of a president's council," for example. The Executive Director will meet with her staff to discuss a work plan for board and staff in implementing the plan. That includes prioritizing the goals, delineating initial action steps and setting up a timeline for following through on those steps. NABJ will schedule a special session or workshop at the convention to walk members through the plan and the process for creating it. They will take questions and accept input. At the earliest possible opportunity, the newly elected Board of Directors will receive a full orientation on their role in the organization, and on the strategic plan itself. They will also receive and act upon the work plans recommended by staff.

At each board meeting, the executive director will report on progress made towards the strategic goals.