

# Civility Matters Event Coordinator Toolkit



*"Relativity applies to physics, not ethics."  
~ Albert Einstein*

## Introduction

The American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA) is proud to present Civility Matters, an effort to promote the first specific purpose in ABOTA's constitution: "To elevate the standards of integrity, honor and courtesy in the legal profession." ABOTA created Civility Matters with the hope that the program would be presented at all ABOTA educational activities, other bar and professional programs, and, especially, in every law school in the country.

The two Civility Matters publications — "Why Civility and Why Now?" and "Presentation Materials" — and accompanying DVDs available through ABOTA provide all the resources needed to host a Civility Matters session, as well as some guidelines for doing so from one of ABOTA's Civility Matters presenters and a member of the ABOTA National Civility Committee, William B. Smith.

ABOTA created this toolkit to provide some additional tips and insights to help members and chapters host and promote successful Civility Matters programs. Included you will find materials on the following topics.

- Selecting an event format
- Coordinating for a specific venue (law school, law office and bar association)
- Securing speakers and tailoring the presentation
- Publicizing the event (sample media advisory and news release available separately)

Much of the guidance found in this toolkit is based on the first-hand lessons learned and experiences of ABOTA members who've successfully implemented these programs in the past and offered their wisdom during its development. Much appreciation goes to these members.

If you are planning an event, please let the ABOTA national team know (1-800-779-5879). We will get your event in our files and be sure to ship materials to you in preparation for your presentation. In addition, we'd be happy to address any questions or concerns you might have and to help you make your event a success.



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*"Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest."  
~ Mark Twain*

## Selecting an Event Format

ABOTA members have had great success implementing the Civility Matters program in a variety of ways. You should feel free to design the event that is right for your audience and your style. As a starting point to design your event, below are two basic event overviews that have worked in the past that are outlined in the Civility Matters "Presentation Materials" booklet from ABOTA.

### Basic Overview #1

#### Interspersed Video, Role Play, Discussion and Key Takeaways

[See sample program 3 from "Presentation Materials" booklet]

#### Key elements:

- 60-90 minutes in length (if 90 minutes, this allows time to play the abbreviated Civility Matters video as part of the presentation)
- Put together a dynamic, 5-person presentation team
  - 1 popular local trial judge to anchor panel
  - 2 ABOTA lawyers for panel: 1 plaintiff, 1 defense
  - 1 mediator for panel (from JAMS, if there is someone nearby)
  - 1 designated computer operator
- Use provided materials to present a tailored, interspersed presentation that engages the audience. Utilize the following structure for each topic to be covered:
  - Visual lead-ins to set up the topic (3-4 video excerpts and/or role plays)
  - Discussion of issue, while showing relevant guidelines on screen
  - Teaching point/takeaway at the end
- Moderate a Q&A between the panel and the audience at the very end of the presentation
- Provide CLE credit and food/refreshments

### Basic Overview #2

#### Video followed by Discussion

[See sample program 1 from "Presentation Materials" booklet]

#### Key elements:

- Put together a dynamic, 4-person presentation team
  - 1 popular local trial judge to anchor panel
  - 2 ABOTA lawyers for panel: 1 plaintiff, 1 defense
  - 1 designated computer operator
- Play one of the Civility Matters DVDs (the longer Civility Matters video is recommended for this format)
- Moderate a panel discussion on topics addressed in the DVD; sample discussion questions are provided in the "Presentation Materials" booklet
- Provide CLE credit and food/refreshments



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*"The most important persuasion tool you have in your entire arsenal is integrity."  
~ Zig Ziglar*

## Coordinating For a Specific Venue

Though the Civility Matters presentation can be the same at each of the three standard venues ABOTA would like to target — law schools, law offices and bar associations — there are a few logistical points to keep in mind that are unique to each. Here are a few things to consider as you coordinate a program for each of the three audiences.

### ▪ Law schools.

- Our experts recommend allowing two to three months at minimum to plan an event at a law school. This will allow enough time to coordinate with law school officials and have the event sufficiently promoted.
- The best times of day to host this session have been over lunch or at the end of the day.
- When consulting the calendar to plan a law school event, be sure to stay away from exam periods and holidays. Both timeframes will make it nearly impossible to draw a crowd.
- You'll want to work closely with the law school to promote the event, utilizing all available means to let students know it is taking place: school bulletin boards, newsletters, publications, websites, listservs, etc.
- As with all venues, it is necessary that your computer operator visit the venue one or more days in advance of your presentation to check out the A/V capabilities and set-up. Since the presentations are highly visual, ensuring that the screen, projector, sound, etc., are working well is essential to leading a successful event.
- Like all venues, having food or other refreshments is recommended. For this audience, the chapter usually picks up the tab for pizza or refreshments for the participating students. In other instances, the coordinator has been able to find a local law firm to pick up the tab for the refreshments. Still other times, the law school might provide food for the presentation. Regardless, like students throughout history, free food is a huge draw and a nice touch.
- Contact the national ABOTA team (1-800-779-5879) at least two weeks before your presentation to request the program booklets and materials be shipped to you.
- ABOTA would like to see every law school be the site of a Civility Matters presentation every year.



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*It takes years to develop a good reputation...  
but only minutes to get a bad one.*

## ▪ Law firms.

- Since law firms have more influence over your potential audience than do other venues, e.g., they can make it mandatory for associates to attend, our experts believe that one month is plenty of time to plan a presentation for a law office.
- Promoting the presentation at a law firm requires no additional effort on your part; the law firm takes care of notifying its people and building the audience.
- Most law firm presentations take place over lunch, with the firm providing lunch for the participants.
- As with all venues, it is necessary that your computer operator visit the venue one or more days in advance of your presentation to check out the A/V capabilities and set-up. Since the presentations are highly visual, ensuring that the screen, projector, sound, etc., are working well is essential to leading a successful event.
- Securing for the participants a free CLE ethics credit for 1 or 1.5 hours (depending on the length of your presentation) is a huge benefit. Be sure to work with your state bar in advance and have the necessary forms on hand to streamline the process for your audience members to receive their credit.
- Some law firms have utilized closed-circuit TV to extend the reach of the presentation to offices in other geographic locations. That may be something to bring up with your contacts as a possibility.
- Contact the national ABOTA team (1-800-779-5879) at least two weeks before your presentation to request the program booklets and materials be shipped to you.
- ABOTA would like to see every major law firm be the site of a Civility Matters presentation as often as we're able to coordinate them.



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*What goes around comes around.  
Payback is hell.*

## ▪ Bar associations.

- Our experts recommend allowing two to three months at minimum to plan an event at a bar association. This will allow enough time to coordinate with association officials and have the event sufficiently promoted.
- The best times of day to host association presentations, we've found, are over lunch or over dinner.
- Promoting the presentation at a bar association usually requires no additional effort on your part; the association takes care of notifying members and building the audience.
- Like all venues, having food or other refreshments is recommended. For this audience, it is customary for the association to coordinate food and to determine how/whether to have members pay for their meal.
- As with all venues, it is necessary that your computer operator visit the venue one or more days in advance of your presentation to check out the A/V capabilities and set-up. Since the presentations are highly visual, ensuring that the screen, projector, sound, etc., are working well is essential to leading a successful event.
- Securing for the participants a free CLE ethics credit for 1 or 1.5 hours (depending on the length of your presentation) is a huge benefit. Be sure to work with your state bar in advance and have the necessary forms on hand to streamline the process for your audience members to receive their credit.
- Contact the national ABOTA team (1-800-779-5879) at least two weeks before your presentation to request the program booklets and materials be shipped to you.
- ABOTA would like to see every bar association be the site of a Civility Matters presentation every year.



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*If you wrestle with a pig you will both get muddy...  
but the pig will enjoy it.*

## Securing Speakers and Tailoring the Presentation

Choosing speakers and personalizing the presentation for your event go hand in hand for making the event a success. Below is advice and insight from those who've planned successful Civility Matters events in the past on securing your speakers and tailoring the presentation.

- **Securing panelists.** Put together an exciting panel. It should be anchored by a popular local trial judge. You also need two ABOTA lawyers — one from the plaintiff side and one for the defense. Finally, whenever possible, contact your closest JAMS office so they can provide a mediator for your to participate on the panel.
- **Panelist bios.** Once you have your panelists identified, you'll want to get their bios (or resumes or CVs). You may want to include biographical details about them in some of your publicity materials for the event, as well as in your introduction of them during the presentation.
- **Panelist pre-meeting and planning session.** For the presentation to go smoothly, it is essential to have a pre-meeting with the panelists, ideally two weeks in advance of the presentation. A model panel outline is available on the presentation materials disk. The purpose of the pre-meeting will be to review all the provided program materials and the model panel outline, tailor the presentation for your audience and your panelists, and assign parts to each participant. During this panelist pre-meeting:
  - Bring a copy of the model panel outline that can be marked up during your meeting.
  - Review the model panel outline together to determine what topics/issues you plan to cover, and to assign members of your panel to present each of those topics/issues.
  - Review all of the videos and exhibits available as part of the Civility Matters program materials, booklets and DVDs to determine which slides, videos, role plays, etc., you will use to illustrate the topics/issues you've decided to cover. (They contain more items than will fit in your allotted time, so you can select the items you like best to include in your presentation.)



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*"Civility costs nothing, and buys everything."  
~ Mary Wortley Montagu*

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- Following the meeting, use your marked-up model presentation outline to generate your final presentation outline, complete with specific assignments/roles included for each of your panelists.
- Print out a copy of the final presentation outline, along with a printout of each of the slides, videos, role plays, etc., that will be used during the presentation. Make a copy for each person participating in your panel.
- Mail each panelist a copy of the now-tailored presentation. This will help each panelist have plenty of time to look it over and prepare for his or her role.



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*"Civility is not a sign of weakness."  
~ John F. Kennedy*

## Publicizing the Event

As appropriate given the venue and audience for a particular Civility Matters presentation, sharing the story about your event with media is a great way to give it a little more reach and let more of your community members know about ABOTA and the work it does nationally and locally. Below are some thoughts and suggestions regarding publicizing your event.

- **Build a media list.** Generate a list of contact information for media who cover the event area (city, county or state) with whom you can communicate about the event. You can invite them to the event in advance using a media advisory and let them know more about the event on event-day using a press release (see points below).
  - **Brainstorm or research online for the news outlets** in your event area, which may include daily and weekly newspapers, community newsletters and news websites/blogs, talk radio stations, network TV affiliates, public access television stations, law school newsletters or publications, etc., as well as any legal or educational news magazines that are published in your community or professional networks.
  - For each of those outlets you've brainstormed, **find contact information** — name, phone and email — for two to four relevant contacts by searching the outlet's website. You'll most likely be looking for reporters or editors in education, legal, metro or community sections. If listed, also add to your list an "assignment editor" (whose role in a newsroom is to assign stories to reporters) and a general contact, such as phone and email for the "news desk" or "new tips" (which are generic catch-all mailboxes that are scanned through for news ideas).
  - If you have any existing contacts at news outlets, such as personal relationships or reporters you've talked to previously for a news story, **add your personal contacts to your list**, as well. Even if they are not the most appropriate contact for this specific story, the fact that you know each other can be a good way to get some help getting your news idea in front of the right person at that outlet.
- **Invite media via a media advisory.** A media advisory is a standard-format document used to invite media to an event. Using the sample media advisory that can be downloaded [here \[insert link\]](#) as part of this toolkit, customize a media advisory for your event, including all relevant event details. About one week before your event (ideally before noon between Monday and Thursday), send your advisory via email to all of the contacts on your media list. If you have time, place follow-up calls to the news outlets about 48 hours in advance of the event, ensuring that the advisory was received and to see if the contact has any questions about the event.





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*Live by the sword,  
die by the sword.*

- **Issue a news release the day of the event.** Issuing a news release is a great way to give reporters attending your event — as well as those unable to make it — details that will help them write a story about your event. In the days leading up to the event, customize the sample news release that can be downloaded [here \[insert link\]](#) as part of this toolkit. On the day of the event (ideally just as the event is starting), send your news release via email to all of the contacts on your media list. Have some printed copies of the release with you at the event to hand to reporters who may be in attendance.
- **Coordinate photography or video.** Having a photographer and/or videographer on hand to capture some or all of the program events is a good idea. Both provide several options for extending the useful life of the presentation throughout the year.

You can use the photographs for ABOTA publications and materials, and you can submit one or two good photos after the event to the outlets on your media list with a copy of the release (a welcome offering in many newsrooms that have ever-shrinking, overworked staffs). You can either hire a photographer, or enlist the help of a friend or chapter member with a nice camera to take photos for you.

You can hire a videographer, or enlist the help of a friend or chapter member, to record the event so that video snippets can be put together for the chapter website or social media channels, or to promote your presentation to your next potential audience.

- **Event signage.** Simple but effective, consider having plenty of banners or signage at the event — and on the speaker's podium, if possible — with the ABOTA name and logo. This will help cement in participants' minds and photos/videos visuals that your organization was responsible for hosting this amazing event.
- **Notifying key third parties.** If there are other organizations or individuals whom you would like to be aware of the event, such as others in the legal community, you can consider sending them an email FYI along with a copy of the news release.
- **Coordinating with public information offices.** Most law schools, law firms and bar associations have their own public affairs, public information or communications offices that publicize events for those entities as part of their daily job function. As relevant, consider reaching out to those individuals to coordinate on media outreach. For download [here \[insert link\]](#) as part of this toolkit you will find a sample news release that you can personalize and share with the participating venue to promote on its own letterhead and through its own media outreach channels.

