

# Reimagine

Strategic Planning for a Collective “Why?”

BY J. RYANN PEYTON

---

Every CBA president must get used to answering the question “why?”—*Why do you want this job? Why now? Why this initiative? Why did you make that decision?*

Depending on who’s asking the question and their motivations for asking it, *why* can be vague or specific, introspective or peripheral, or sincere or sardonic. Ultimately, *why* is a question every CBA president has to answer for themselves.

It is the burden of the president to identify, create, and champion alignment in the collective *why* of our community. To generate this alignment, my *why* must be nimble in some ways yet durable in others. The success of our bar association depends on a collective vision that serves and inspires our members to engage with our programs, build relationships with one another, and be motivated to lead.

This bar year is a strategic planning year for the CBA. The current CBA strategic plan, REFOCUS 2020, was formulated in 2016 to guide the CBA through 2020. When it was drafted, no one could have imagined how the year 2020 would evolve. A global pandemic, unprecedented political divisiveness, and a racial justice reckoning 200 years in the making reshaped our country, our communities, and our profession. In light of the extraordinary circumstances, the CBA’s strategic plan was renewed for another three years.

Now, six years later, the CBA is poised to embark on its strategic work again and collectively envision the next iteration of its *why* for Colorado’s legal community.



## Embrace Your Inner Architect

One of my *whys* for serving as CBA president this year is the opportunity to engage in the strategic planning process. I happily geek-out on strategic initiative development, research and assessment, and building blueprints for organizations. I’ve had the opportunity to lead several organizations through the strategic planning process, and each time I’ve learned more about how to enjoy the process.

Unfortunately, there’s a common assumption among professionals that strategic planning needs to be challenging, exhausting, insufferable, or a necessary evil to obtain funding and credibility. But it doesn’t have to be this way. The strategic planning process can be the catalyst that brings a fractured community together. Strategic planning can be an opportunity for bridge building.

While the crisis levels of 2020 have subsided and we’ve become adept at navigating the

**The success of our bar association depends on a collective vision that serves and inspires our members to engage with our programs, build relationships with one another, and be motivated to lead.**

“new normal” of our polarized pandemic world, lawyers will still have an important role to play in 2023 and beyond. In our roles as problem solvers, conflict resolution-ists, and social visionaries, lawyers can be enormously helpful in reconnecting a fractured world. We are, after all, in the dispute resolution business, and resolving conflict is central to what we do.

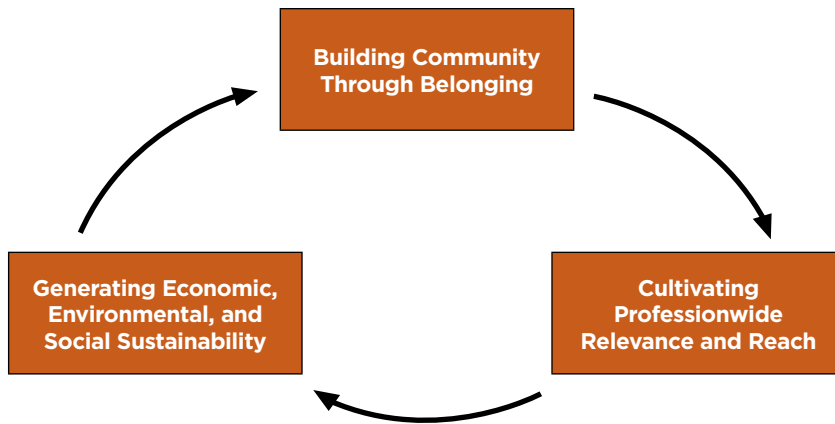
To do this well, we begin in our own house, by reconnecting our own profession and legal community. As architects, we can be bridge builders for and amongst one another.

## Disrupting the Process

Another opportunity that comes with the strategic planning process is the ability to change or disrupt old patterns in thinking, planning, and doing within an organization. It is within this disruption that real progress and change can be made. Six years into a strategic plan that was only supposed to last three years, the CBA is well-positioned to disrupt its own processes and design an innovative plan for success. To cultivate this innovation, we will reimagine our process in a number of ways. Most important, we will strive to do the following:

- Ask the tough questions. We will not shy away from the variety of elephants in the

## THE CBA'S THREE VISIONARY THEMES



room that the CBA needs to address to serve its members with integrity.

- Empower our members to see themselves as leaders and owners of this process. Our goal is to generate ownership in the process from the start so that our members and our member-leaders have an attachment to the strategic vision.
- Go beyond solving organizational problems. We will approach this process from a place of success and abundance to answer the question, “What does the CBA do better than anyone else?” Our vision will center on what we can do from this place of prosperity, rather than how we are limited by our challenges.

We will use this process to take risks and to ask questions like *What if?* with a new sense of joy and excitement. Every organization can stand a little bit of disruption from time to time. This is our opportunity to disrupt forward.

### Let's Get to Work

The CBA's 2023 strategic plan will focus on three long-term visionary themes:

- building community through belonging
- generating economic, environmental, and social sustainability
- cultivating professionwide relevance and reach.

Although the CBA will generate and implement a long-term (three-year) strategic plan, the structure of the CBA's strategic plan will

**Every organization can stand a little bit of disruption from time to time. This is our opportunity to disrupt forward.**

consist of short-term initiatives to be completed in the first 6 to 12 months of the plan. Ideally, the CBA will generate new short-term initiatives annually to allow experimentation across different initiatives and prevent stagnation or lack of nimbleness as industry and member needs change.

The process will be led by a Strategic Planning Committee comprised of CBA members, leaders, and staff. The committee's work will be divided into three phases.

### *Phase 1: Research and Assessment, September 2022–November 2022*

The goal of phase 1, currently underway, is to collect information on best practices and bar association movement trends across the United States (and the world) in the following areas:

1. bar programs
2. communication delivery and technology infrastructure

3. member demographics and climate
4. sustainability and partnerships.

A working group will be assigned to each area to identify best practices and growth trends in that area and compare them with what the CBA is currently doing. The four working groups will comprise CBA members who will work under the leadership of a CBA executive council at-large member.

### *Phase 2: Community Input, December 2022–January 2023*

Phase 2 will be devoted to learning about the needs, wants, desires, characteristics, and demographics of our membership. Individual preferences regarding each of the four areas above will be sought through online surveys, focus groups, and town hall meetings engaging local bars, sections, diversity bars, and staff members.

### *Phase 3: Building the Blueprint, February 2023–June 2023*

This phase will be divided into three components:

1. Information sharing—The information gathered in phases 1 and 2 will be shared with the Strategic Planning Committee, Executive Council, general membership, and other stakeholders.
2. Priority statement—The committee and other stakeholders will use the information collected to identify short-term priority areas within the three visionary themes for the CBA in the coming years.
3. Developing the blueprint—The committee and other stakeholders will use the priorities identified to create goals and approaches that will then form the 2023 CBA strategic plan.

### We Need Your Voice

The voice and expertise of every CBA member is imperative to this process. Our goal is for you to see yourself reflected in the CBA through its strategic vision. As such, your representation matters and is requested. Bring your *why* and your big questions. Join us in building bridges to the future of our bar association. 