

Stress, Ethics, Professionalism Top Attorney Concerns

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A survey of State Bar of Arizona members conducted in June found that high stress and work-life balance are the two most significant personal challenges that members face in their work as attorneys. Among respondents to the survey, 29 percent said that high stress was a concern, while 27 percent cited the difficulties of balancing work and family life. Other key challenges included keeping up with new developments in the law and time management (21 percent each) and keeping up with technology (19 percent).

The question about personal challenges was new to the survey this year. Members also were asked for the first time about what they see as the most significant challenges facing the legal profession. Respondents most often cited a lack of ethics and professionalism (27 percent), difficult economic times (27 percent), the

affordability of legal services (26 percent), poor public perception (25 percent), and too many attorneys (23 percent).

In a third related question, members were asked to identify the issues they believe are most important for the Bar to address. The most frequent responses included being more responsive to sole practitioners and small law firms (31 percent), efforts to increase professionalism (30 percent), working to preserve judicial independence (29 percent), working to improve public perception of the profession (25 percent), and technology training (22 percent).

Another question added to the survey this year focused on members' plans in the next five years, asking whether attorneys intended to retire, leave the profession or make other changes in their careers. Forty percent of the members surveyed indicated that

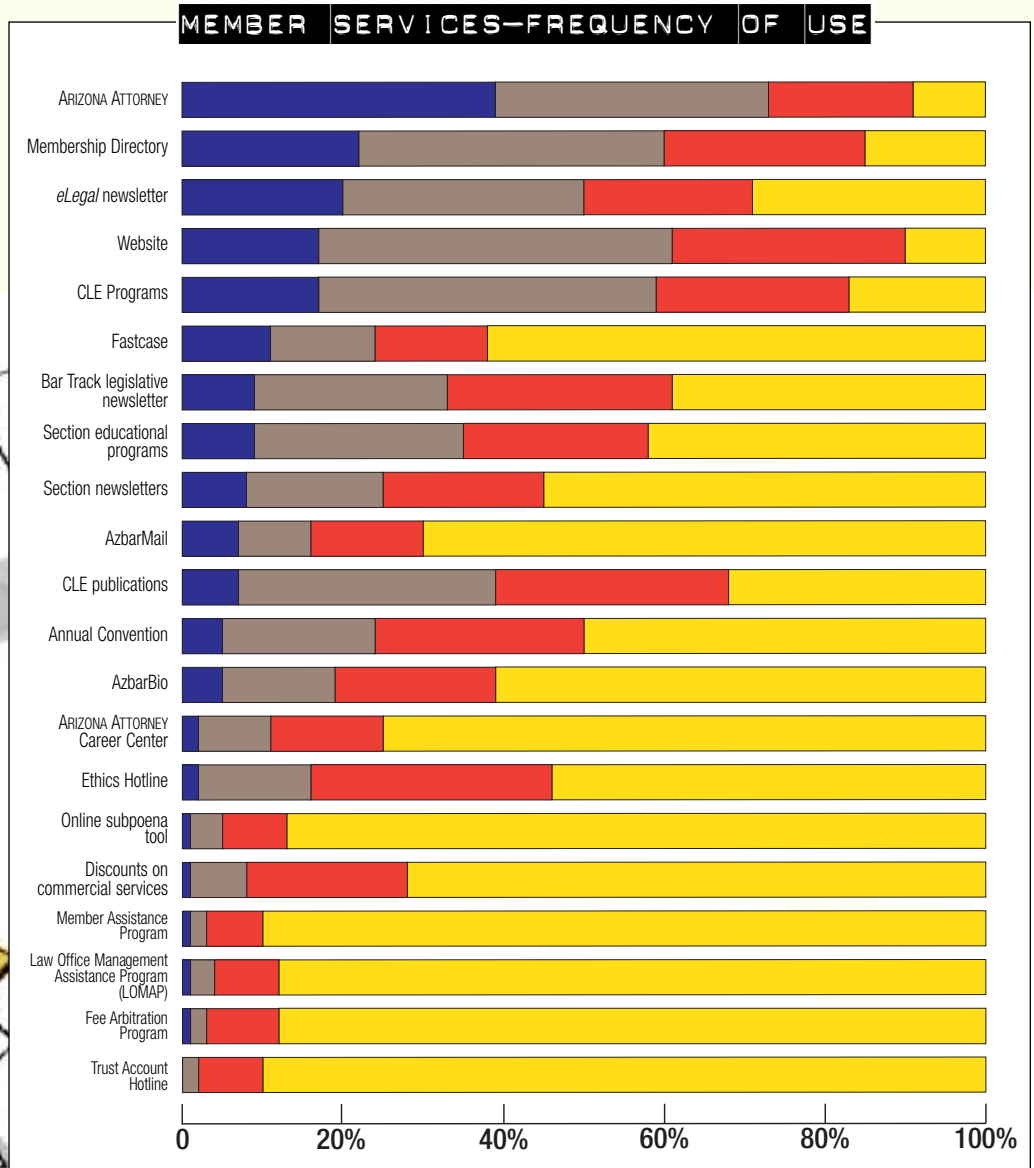
they expect to make some kind of change in that time period. Nearly a quarter of respondents (23 percent) said they plan to leave the profession either through retirement (16 percent) or by working but leaving the practice of law (7 percent). Another nine percent plan to

The 2014 SBA member survey was conducted by **BRUCE MERRILL, Ph.D.**, an expert in public opinion research and professor emeritus in the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University, and **TARA BLANC, Ph.D.**, an assistant teaching professor in the Sol Price School of Public Policy at the University of California and an expert in survey research.



How frequently do you utilize each of the following State Bar of Arizona membership resources?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never/Unaware of the service



change the setting of their practice, four percent intend to change their primary area of practice, and four percent expect to move out of state.

In a related question, members were asked whether they have a plan for their practice in case of death, disability or Bar discipline. This issue was raised by the State Bar's Succession Task Force amid concerns about the growing number of abandoned practices by members with no plan in place that addresses what should happen to clients

or their files. Among those who responded to the survey, 59 percent say they do not have a plan should such a crisis prevent them from practicing law.

In looking at members' view of the State Bar, the survey found that overall satisfaction with Bar membership is down since 2011. Three years ago, just over three-quarters were very (26 percent) or somewhat (51 percent) satisfied with their membership; in 2014 just

HOW WE SURVEYED

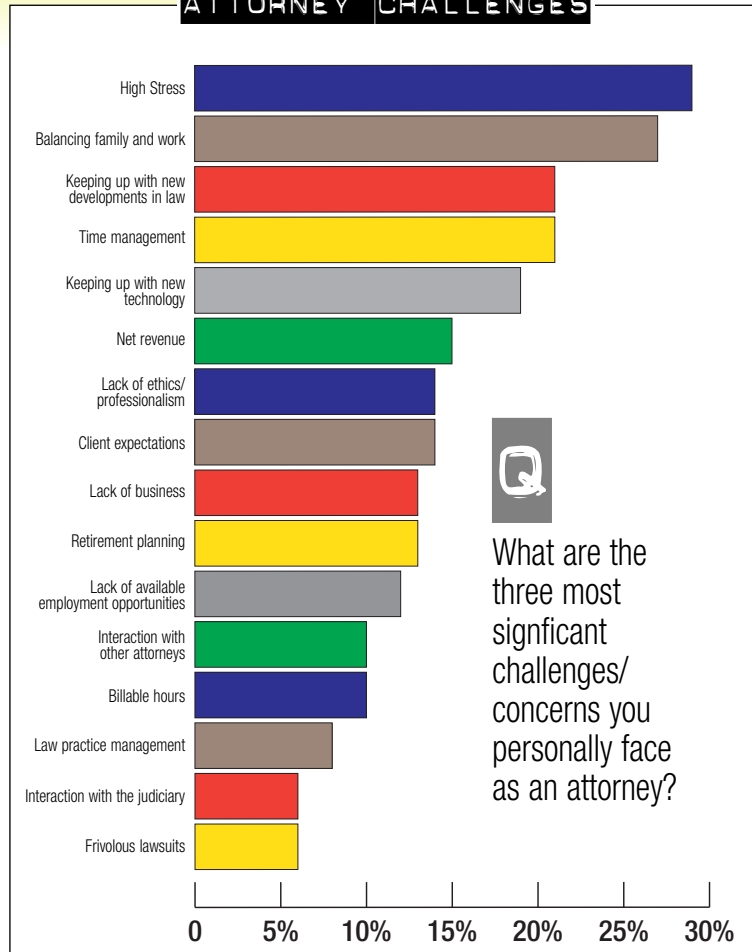
All questions posed were part of the overall member survey conducted by the State Bar every three years. The survey, which asks members a broad range of questions ranging from overall satisfaction with the Bar to what they consider the most valuable services, was conducted from June 4 through June 27 by Merrill Research. The 22,433 Bar members with known email addresses were invited via email to complete a questionnaire on the Internet, to which 2,525, or 11 percent, responded. Demographic analyses showed that those who responded constituted a valid representation of the entire State Bar membership.

ATTORNEY CHALLENGES

under two-thirds were very (11 percent) or somewhat (52 percent) satisfied.

Dissatisfaction tended to be highest among attorneys who practice criminal law; those who are sole practitioners or in firms with less than five attorneys; those practicing in firms with between 300 and 499 lawyers; those admitted to the Bar between 1980 and 1999; and those between the ages of 30 and 39. Satisfaction with Bar membership tends to be highest among those who work in firms with 500 or more attorneys; those who practice law in the areas of employment or labor, immigration, health, real estate, alternative dispute resolution, and construction; and attorneys under the age of 30 or those age 70 or older.

The drop in satisfaction may be related to the recent controversy and debate surrounding an

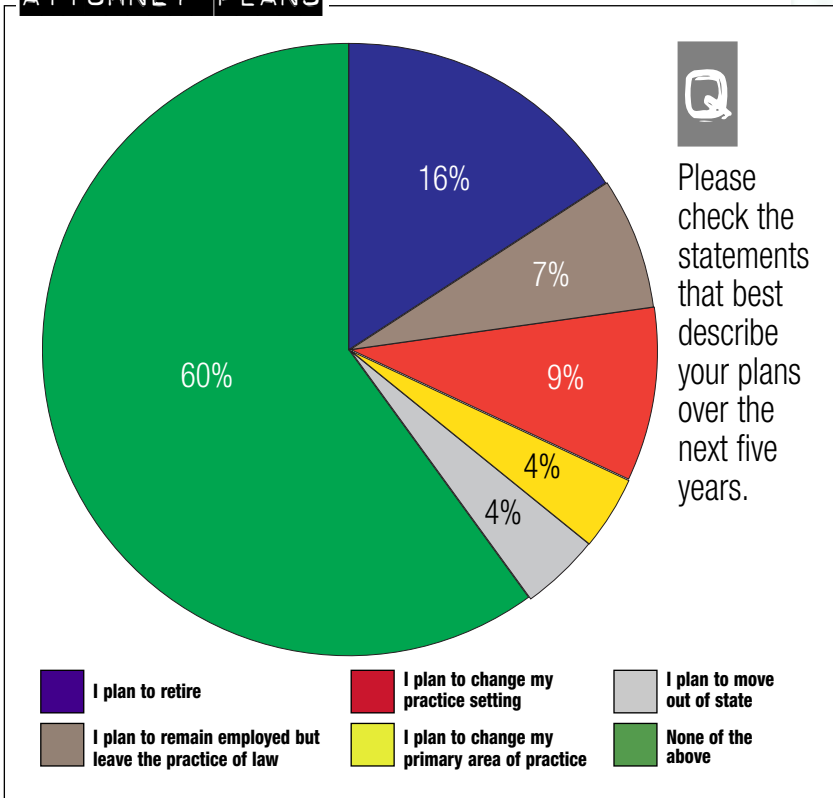


What are the three most significant challenges/concerns you personally face as an attorney?

increase in member dues. While the level of satisfaction among members still is relatively high for an organization with mandatory membership, the decline is an issue that Bar leadership and management needs to address.

When asked an open-ended question about the most important membership benefit, responses in the current survey echoed those found in 2011. Twenty-three percent of members said that the most important membership benefit the State Bar offers continues to be CLE, followed by the license/ability to practice (18 percent), and Fastcase/legal research. Fourteen percent said the State Bar offers them no

ATTORNEY PLANS



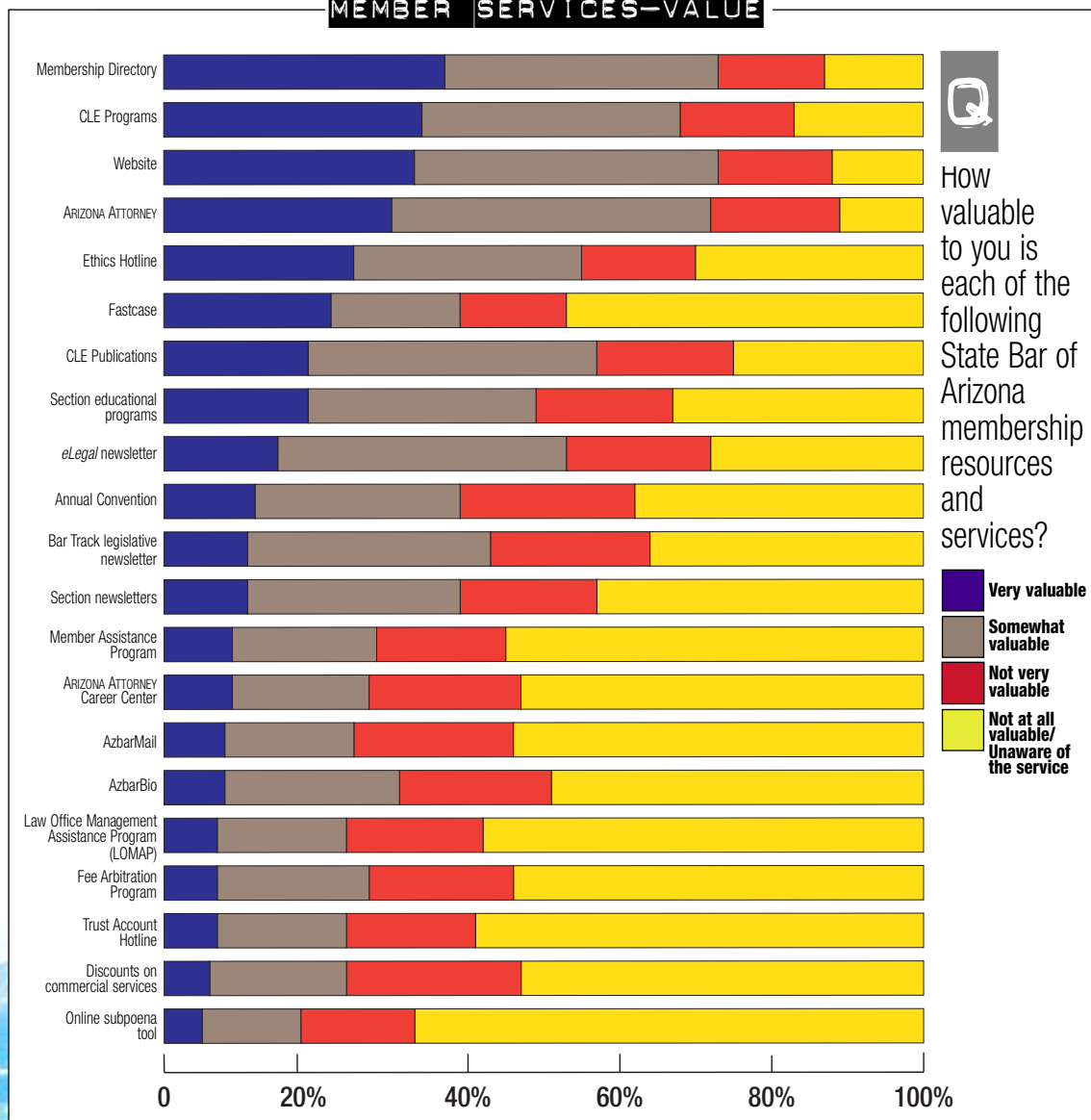
Please check the statements that best describe your plans over the next five years.



MEMBER SERVICES—VALUE

benefit, up from 10 percent in 2011.

Based on open-ended responses, the three main areas of complaint also are very similar to those identified in 2011: the costs, quality and requirements related to CLE; the cost of membership dues (particularly for retired and inactive members); and the mandatory nature of membership. Analysis of the responses also suggests that there may be a perceived lack of support from the State Bar by members who work in small firms and by those who are “mid-career.” Training, research tools and resources that are better



and less costly rank highest among additional resources and services that members seek from the State Bar.

According to the current survey, the most often used membership resources continue to be ARIZONA ATTORNEY magazine (73 percent), the AZBar.org website (60 percent), the Membership Directory (60 percent), CLE programs (59 percent), and the eLegal newsletter (50 percent). However, use of these services has declined from 2011, across the board. The use of Fastcase is up slightly from 2011, rising in the ranks in the current survey. Among the services and benefits used by less than 10 percent of members were the Trust Account Hotline, the Fee Arbitration

Program, the Law Office Management Assistance Program, the Member Assistance Program, discounts on commercial services, and the online subpoena tool.

Those services and benefits reported as most valuable continue to be the Membership Directory and the website (73 percent each), ARIZONA ATTORNEY magazine (72 percent), CLE programs (68 percent), and the Ethics Hotline (55 percent). The value of Fastcase is perceived as slightly higher in 2014 than it was in 2011. The services seen as least valuable by 75 percent or more of the membership include the online subpoena tool, discounts on com-

HOW THINGS CHANGE

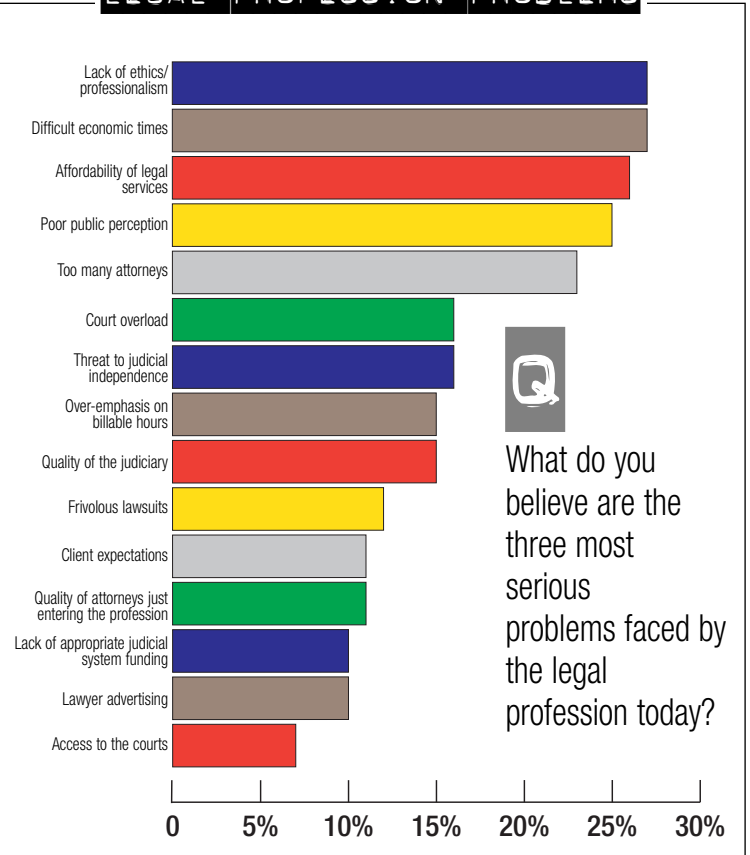
You can read and compare the 2011 survey results here:
<http://www.azattorneymag-digital.com/azattorneymag/201109/#pg19>

LEGAL PROFESSION PROBLEMS

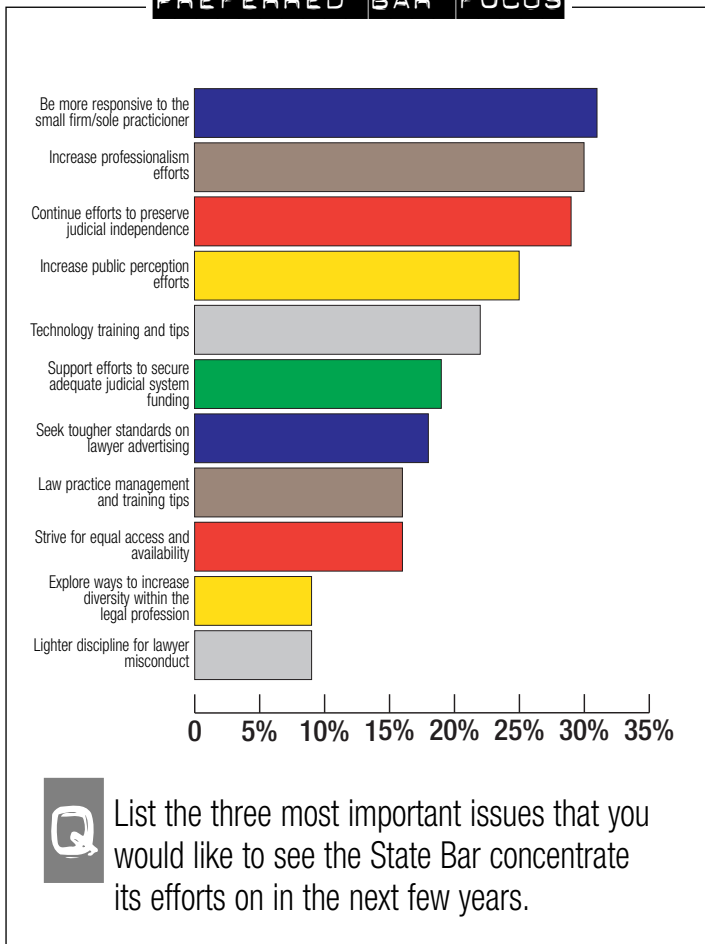
mercial services, the Trust Account Hotline, and the Law Office Management Assistance Program.

New questions in the 2014 survey gathered additional information about the use of the Member Directory. Members reported using the Directory most often for contact information for other State Bar members (67 percent), contact information for the courts (38 percent), and finding a lawyer by city (34 percent). More than two-thirds (68 percent) of members would prefer a more robust online member search tool as opposed to the printed directory. As might be expected, younger members (age 49 and under) were much more likely to prefer the online directory.

Despite the drop in overall satisfaction, the data indicate that the services used most often by State Bar members are valued and highly regarded. However, the focus on the need for more, better and less costly resources—coupled with the subgroup analysis of dissatisfaction with membership and the challenges identified by the membership for themselves, the profession and the Bar—suggests that there is an opportunity to examine many of State Bar services and benefits for relevance to the member population. This may be particularly critical in light of the fact that nearly one-quarter of the membership plans to leave the profession in the next five years. [AZ](#)



PREFERRED BAR FOCUS



MEMBER SERVICES—CLE PROGRAMS

