

How To Present Candidates for Nomination Effectively: Tips For Success

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One of the best things about belonging to our College is encountering people who've made extraordinary contributions to the profession of law practice management and who we might never have met if not for the College.

And, one of the most rewarding and difficult tasks of the Trustees is to assess nominees for induction into the College. We assess achievements against the criteria for fellowship and have spirited discussions about all candidates' merits. Our information source is the nomination form you complete when nominating a prospective Fellow. Trustees can't know every candidate. Your nomination form may be all we have.

The Trustees take the nomination process very seriously. Some candidates advance and other nominations are declined. Here are some tips for an effective nomination.

- Read the criteria and follow the nomination form very carefully. It's a roadmap to present your candidate's merits – make sure that every element is covered.
- The Ten-Year Test. It's a requirement that a candidate's contribution be documented over a full decade. Be sure to include objectively verifiable facts that show your candidate meets this test. The easiest way is likely to be some writing, an appointment or a speech.
- This College is dedicated to honoring achievement in law practice management. To be a leader means that the nominee has shared his or her knowledge with others – that's what leadership is. Normally, a candidate will have a distinguished record of publications and speaking to professional groups as well as service to organizations. Often, Fellows have made significant contributions to the community and been visibly successful in the practice of law or business. Keep in mind that what we honor is your candidate's contribution to the field of law practice management (there are other Colleges that recognize distinguished legal practice).
- Ask yourself why your candidate is special. While you know it's true, we may not. What contribution has he or she made that was special, unique or innovative? Communicate your enthusiasm for the candidate by articulating that special element in one paragraph for the inscription that's read when the candidate is inducted. This must capture why the candidate deserves the honor of Fellowship (because it is an honor).
- Go beyond the bare bones of a formal resume. Give us a sense of the candidate as a human being, as a colleague, a friend, a mentor. Google your candidate and supplement the résumé with more information. If the candidate really has made an extraordinary contribution, we would expect it to show up on public records accessible over the Internet. If your candidate has a Web site, look closely at it; if she or he is a lawyer, take a look at biographies in legal directories like Martindale-Hubbell or Findlaw. If you've access to a law library, run searches in LegalTrac or *Index to Legal Periodicals* to turn up old articles by your candidate.
- If you can't find information it may mean that the candidate doesn't yet have enough experience to be eligible. It's also why finding the right Fellow to second your nomination is crucial; others have information that you don't have.
- Should you or shouldn't you ask your candidate for help in assembling the information? It's up to you: there are good reasons not to (and, you can often enlist a colleague of the nominee to help gather information). Since there's no guarantee that any nominee will be admitted, it's tough to explain to a friend who you've advanced that they've been unsuccessful. And, it can be a lovely element of surprise when you tell your nominee for the first time that he/she has been elected.
- Avoid trivia. Exceptional candidates have exceptional profiles. You may find pages and pages of background, and we need relevant facts to help assess the merits. But it's unlikely that the entire package need be more than a dozen pages. Select only the key pages from a Web site; provide a selection of highly relevant articles, not the entire list of the candidate's writings or speeches.
- Don't underestimate the time it will take you to assemble the candidate's package. The deadlines sneak up - it's not too early to begin thinking about next fall's nominations!