

CEO REPORT

**Fall 2009
San Diego, CA**

To: ACBL Board of Directors

cc: Michael Kovacich
Peter Rank

From: Jay Baum, CEO
ACBL

MEMBERSHIP:

October continued the strong pattern of 2009 with a net gain of 623 members. Total gains for the ten months = 3,039. Oct 09 vs. Oct 08 total 2,906.

New members for 2009 were 10,954 (+11%) 2009 will be a great year for membership.

<http://web2.acbl.org/bb/BoD/09OctoberMembership.pdf>

FINANCE:

The finances of ACBL continue to be in excellent condition. In spite of the miserable return on our CDs, we remain healthy. After the completion of the new headquarters and all expenses are paid, ACBL will be well within the mandated reserve guidelines.

TOURNAMENT DIVISION:

Regional tables are doing well with an average of 1,454 tables per tournament. With two months remaining, we expect to finish with 177,000 tables – a very good year.

While sectional tables are much higher than 2008, the table average is flat with 2008. We will end the year with a significant increase in total tables, due to 29 additional tournaments.

STaCs continue to show growth and are on a record breaking pace for average tables per tournament as well as total tables. Even with six fewer STaCs this year, the popularity of these events will push total tables to the 100,000 mark.

<http://web2.acbl.org/bb/BOD/October 2009 Tables.pdf>

CLUBS:

The Club Director's Handbook has been updated and is available on our website. Baron Barclay Bridge Supply has been sent the updated file for printing purposes.

An overview of the ACBLscore program was made available to the headquarters employees who were not familiar with the history of the program or how it pertains to their job responsibilities. We also had individual sessions for employees in the Club and Member Services Department. Many of them use the program in their daily job functions. This training will allow them to perform their duties more efficiently.

The club game sanction renewal forms for 2010 have been mailed to all club managers. We will begin mailing the 2010 forms and membership applications in late November.

Club tables through the first nine months are showing a small gain for 2009. Face to face games are slightly ahead of 2008, due to a healthy increase in special games.

Online games continue to be impressive in size and growth with over 400,000 total tables an increase of 16% from 2008.

Attached is the club tables report as of Oct. 21.

[http://web2.acbl.org/bb/BOD/Club Tbls Report 10-21-09.pdf](http://web2.acbl.org/bb/BOD/Club%20Tb%20Report%2010-21-09.pdf)

EDUCATION:

In our on-going efforts to keep our youth teacher database current and reflective of individuals who are active or have an interest in youth bridge, we sent e-mails on 9/30 to 366 Youth Bridge teachers. They were asked for updated information and verification that they are still interested in Youth bridge. To date (10/12/09), we have received responses from 97 teachers with completed information. Only one teacher has indicated that she is no longer interested in receiving information. There were 21 e-mails returned as undeliverable.

The week ending 10/09/09, letters were sent with self-addressed return envelopes to 330 teachers for whom we had no e-mail address.

We were very pleased with the return rate of responses from our e-mail request and hope to have a similar return from our mail request.

REAL ESTATE:

Construction is underway. We have a target date of March 8th for move-in. A general overall presentation will be made during the full board meeting.

MARKETING:

Amnesty Promotional Campaign

The amnesty promotional campaign, launched this past June as a way to encourage those with lapsed membership to rejoin the ACBL, continues to generate membership renewals.

A post card mailing to approximately 7,500 was sent June 29, 2009. On August 18th a reminder email was sent out to 4,647 former ACBL members with unrecorded masterpoints who have been inactive since 2006 – encouraging them to take advantage of the amnesty program offer.

As of this date, a total of 1,791 past members have renewed their membership. Of those individuals, 285 took advantage of the “special offer” (which expired October 1, 2009) and renewed for a 3 year membership. A free deck of cards, along with a “thank you” cover letter, was sent to those who took advantage of the “special offer.” A final reminder will be sent, via email, in December, to serve as a “push” to rejoin prior to the amnesty deadline of December 31, 2009.

Learn to Play Bridge

Due to popular demand, the Learn to Play Bridge software has been reprinted on CD format. The CDs are now again available for teachers and clubs to use as a “handout” tool to help encourage and promote learning how to play the game of bridge.

The Learn to Play Bridge software is also still available for downloading from the ACBL web site. Since February, 2009, Marketing has been tracking the amount of downloads each month and capturing e-mail addresses of those who download the software. As of this date, there have been 33,712 downloads of the Learn to Play Bridge software. Monthly downloads average approximately 3,000 per month – interesting to note is that Learn to Play Bridge postcards were handed out during the AARP 2009 Convention and downloads to the software after that date has more than doubled. Marketing plans to implement a follow-up email campaign to those who have downloaded the software.

AARP 2009 Convention

In an effort to increase awareness and target the retired market segment, Marketing exhibited at the Life@50+ National Event & Expo in Las Vegas, NV from October 22 – October 24, 2009. There were a total of 24,100 attendees at this convention and traffic to the ACBL booth was almost non-stop during the three day event. It is estimated that, at minimum, 25% of the attendees paid a visit to the ACBL booth.

Additional awareness of the ACBL and its booth at the AARP event was created by signage that Marketing developed and had printed on a hand sanitizer station that was prominently located near the restrooms in the AARP food court.

In an effort to generate prospective leads, Marketing implemented a random drawing component to this year's exhibit. A total of 807 prospective leads were generated as a result of entries into the drawing. A follow-up communication is planned for those who entered the drawing.

Marketing arranged for Fred Gitelman to give two stage presentations entitled "Learning & Playing Bridge Online". Approximately one hundred people attended each of the presentations and flocked to the ACBL exhibit booth after each presentation.

2010 Goodwill Calendar

The 2010 Goodwill calendar has been created, produced and printed. The theme of the calendar is emphasizing the mental and social benefits of bridge. The calendars will be distributed at the San Diego NABC Goodwill Reception.

Cooperative Advertising Program

The Cooperative Advertising program continues to be a successful and popular resource for clubs and teachers in their efforts to reach out to beginner and/or newcomer players. The program has subsidized advertising costs for 309 beginner/newcomer ad campaigns submitted by clubs and teachers through the first ten months of 2009. [CoOpOct09.pdf](#)

YOUTH INITIATIVES

Recap of the 2009 Youth NABC

There were 168 youth players from 22 states, 5 Canadian provinces and 4 countries who attended the 2009 Youth NABC held in Washington, DC this past July. The age range of the attendees broke out as follows:

- 36.9% = 10-12 years of age
- 23.8% = 15-17 years of age
- 20.9% = 13-14 years of age
- 8.9% = under 10 years of age
- 7.7% = 18-19 years of age

Marketing officially launched the new youth web site www.youth4bridge.org at the Youth NABC in Washington, DC. Ball caps with the new web address and logo were handed out to all attendees of the Youth NABC.

Marketing hired a videographer to capture footage of the Youth NABC event to be used in a youth promotional DVD and was able to take advantage of Bill Gates' surprise visit to the Youth NABC by requesting that Gates speak on camera about what he believes the benefits are for playing bridge. Gates' comments are currently posted on YouTube and have been included in the promotional DVD. The YouTube clip of Bill Gates speaking at the Youth NABC can be found at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJcFspR5koc>

2010 Youth NABC

A date for the 2010 Youth NABC has been set - July 29-31, 2010 at the Summer NABC in New Orleans.

In addition, a logo for the 2010 Youth NABC has been developed and will be used on all promotional materials and signage for the upcoming Youth NABC. The design was created to allow for the implementation of a “Mystery Hand” contest which will allow the youth an opportunity to guess the name of the famous “mystery hand” and win an entry into a drawing for a prize.

Marketing and Education are in the process of developing marketing material and signage for the 2010 Youth NABC. In addition, content and pre-registration forms are being developed for placement on the Youth4Bridge web site.

Youth Promotional DVD

Marketing has completed the development of a youth promotional DVD. This DVD will serve as a tool to reach the youth audience. The DVD will be placed in all school promotional packets and will be available to anyone interested in promoting the game of bridge to the youth audience. Copies of the DVD will be provided to all Board members at the San Diego NABC. In addition copies of the DVD will be made available to all attending the “Teaching Young People Bridge Seminar” and the “Workshop for Teachers of Youth Players” at the San Diego NABC.

Public Relations Opportunity – “Staying in the Game – Bridge & Your Brain in the War Against Dementia” Conference – Laguna Woods, CA

Marketing Director, Vicki Campbell, and Club & Member Services Director, Carol Robertson were requested to attend this conference by the Laguna Woods Duplicate Club. The conference, scheduled for November 12th, will include speakers from UC Irvine Institute of Memory Impairment & Neurological Disorders who have conducted research studies that indicate the mental health benefits of bridge. Media from “The Wall Street Journal,” “The New York Times,” “The Orange County Register,” and “The LA Times” are expected to be in attendance at the conference. Marketing will provide media kits to all media contacts. In addition, ACBL marketing and informational materials will be available to attendees of the conference. Laguna Woods Duplicate Club anticipates approximate 600 individuals will attend this event.

Web Site Enhancements

Marketing continues to work toward improving visitor experience to the ACBL web sites. Enhancements that are currently in the process of being developed are:

- Creating the ability for clubs to post daily results on the ACBL web site
 - Six clubs served as “testers” – testing phase is completed and revisions are being made to the Instruction guide.
 - Official soft launch of this program is expected to occur by end of November or early December.

- Optimizing the ACBL search engine by:
 - Standardizing document names on the ACBL web site;
 - Adding key search words/phrases to the Mini Google search engine
- Created a web page on ACBL web site dedicated to online bridge resources.

Social Media

In an effort to take advantage of the most up-to-date marketing channels and tactics to create brand awareness, Marketing has taken steps to have an ACBL presence on the following online social media platforms. Until strategies are more developed for these channels, Marketing will continue to maintain a “soft launch” approach of the ACBL’s presence in these platforms;

Facebook – ACBL has created an ACBL fan page – which will allow ACBL the ability to post notices, solicit feedback and track comments of those who sign up as “fans” of the ACBL. Currently, almost 400 individuals have signed up as ACBL “fans” and approximately 600 individuals have joined the American Contract Bridge League group on FaceBook.

Twitter – ACBL has established a Twitter account and is already taking advantage of this social media platform. Twitter allows ACBL the ability to send out electronic “tweets” to those who sign up as “followers” of the ACBL on this social media platform.

LinkedIn – ACBL has created a “group” on this social media platform which allows ACBL to post news items, initiate discussion topics and engage with those who sign up as members of the ACBL group.

Sponsorships

Marketing continues to identify companies/organizations that may be interested in sponsorship opportunities with ACBL. Travel/Cruise Company Sponsorship/Incentive Program is one current example. Since January 2009, ACBL has gained a total of 62 new members and a total of 156 advance renewals via this program.