

**DELIVERING OUR MESSAGE**  
**Court Communication Plan**  
**for the Judicial Branch of Florida**

**Year One Implementation Report**

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Submitted May 22, 2017

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## **INTRO: Delivering Our Message**

### *the first year*

Delivering Our Message / Court Communication Plan for the Judicial Branch of Florida took effect in January 2016 after unanimous approval by the Florida Supreme Court in late 2015.

Developed with input from judges, court public information officers (PIOs) and other court staff from all around the state, the plan was proposed to the Court by the Judicial Management Council, an advisory body that includes judges, lawyers and non-lawyers. The JMC designed a plan to help Florida's courts, no matter what their size or local attributes, improve their communications with all their audiences. As its title suggests, the plan is intended to help Florida courts reinforce the central message they all must consistently deliver: Courts are indispensable to our civil society, our economy and our democracy. This unified message is so vitally important because courts must have the trust of the public to function. And public trust in courts grows from public understanding of courts.

The plan emphasizes the importance of age-old principles essential to any healthy communication dynamic – building and maintaining relationships of trust. These relationships enhance communications during emergencies and other times of stress and challenge, such as high-profile trials and hearings. They also improve the understanding of the judicial process for everyone. A shining example: staff in the 13<sup>th</sup> Circuit toured facilities that provide services to the people who use the Circuit's problem-solving courts "in order to build relationships that are the keys to success."

The plan also calls for the use of communications technology, including social media to the extent appropriate in judicial settings.

In the spring of 2016, just a few months after the new Communication Plan took effect, Chief Justice Jorge Labarga addressed the state's court PIOs at their statewide professional association's annual educational conference and charged them with the hands-on implementation of the plan, urging them to be strong advocates for the plan in their courts. His core message: It's not enough that justice is done, it must also be seen to be done. The PIOs in

the 20 Judicial Circuits, five District Courts of Appeal and Florida Supreme Court held regular teleconference meetings during 2016 to work collaboratively on implementation of the plan.

As directed by the Communication Plan, this first annual report on implementation of the plan draws on the assessments of Florida's court PIOs. In January 2017, the PIOs described communication practices, accomplishments and challenges. They identified areas that need more attention but also described many creative and effective initiatives and programs.

Overall, Florida's court PIOs are optimistic about their implementation of this plan based on how they rate the achievements their courts made in 2016. On a scale of 1-10, the average rating was an 8.

This level of achievement and confidence could be considered natural in light of Florida's history as a national leader in the area of court communications. Since 2002, every court in the state has had a designated PIO -- some have had PIOs since the 1990s -- to serve as the primary point of contact in emergencies. In most courts, the person designated as PIO serves a different role in the court as well; often the marshal or trial court administrator may be the designated PIO but other court staff with a variety of important responsibilities apart from communication have been tapped to take on the task of managing the myriad demands of "public information officer." Since then, court communication has grown and the role of the court PIO has evolved.

As detailed in this report, Florida's PIOs do much more than serve as the media contact during hurricanes or high profile cases. Whether serving full or part-time (most often with limited time and resources), court PIOs across the state are involved in media and public relations, community outreach, educational programs, social media, court publications, internal communications and court events and more. Court PIOs work hard to build strong relationships with the media, local governments and justice system partners, they support open lines of communication both internally and externally, and they promote efforts to make courts more understandable to the public.

To help with these duties, Florida's court PIOs can draw on relationships with their colleagues around the state, primarily through their membership in the Florida Court Public Information Officers association, an educational nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation created a

decade ago to advance ongoing dialogue among courts, media and the public and to promote professionalism and best practices among Florida's court PIOs.

As we all know, Florida has a proud history of open government. Thanks to the wisdom and boldness of our high court decades ago in the mid-1970s, cameras in our courtrooms are commonplace and have been accepted as part of our governmental culture for many, many years. The Communication Plan is just the latest chapter in this history.

Finally, there is the simple fact of experience. For whatever reason, Florida has had more than its share of high-profile trials and appeals, giving its judges and court staff plenty of first-hand experience in carrying out their jobs in the intense glare of media and public attention. Florida is fortunate to have a commitment to openness, a network of court professionals focused on communication and a plan to effectively deliver fundamental messages about the state's third branch of government.

## **PART I. WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA ...**

### **... effective design and policies that fit courts**

Florida's courts are giving more – or new – thought to the organization and content on their websites. Of the 20 circuits, 18 have either entirely redesigned their website or reorganized and updated – or are planning to do so. This focus on website design is an example of wise planning because websites are the primary communication tool for every court. This status is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

The FCPIO created a Web Content Committee to identify essential content all trial courts must include on their websites. This web content list will be available later this year. Additionally, the appellate courts have a workgroup developing a template for the redesign of the five District Court of Appeal websites. In every court, the fundamental question staff are asking themselves is how to improve access to information for the public.

One high-profile topic explored by some courts in 2016

***We believe that social media is allowing us to better deliver our message. We feel that the presence and activity on social media is no longer a question as it offers a vehicle to spread information. Through the use of social media, we are bridging access to groups (particularly younger users) and we are better targeting our initiatives.***

-- Karen Levey, 9th Circuit

was social media. While the Communication Plan does not require courts to use social media, some courts have embraced these new tools and are excited by the results. Other courts are hesitant and cite various issues that give them pause. A Social Media Committee created by the FCPIO developed a model policy for courts to consider when they decide to move ahead with social media.

There is understandable concern over court use of social media like Facebook and Twitter. But the dynamic communications environment they give courts is becoming the go-to place to get our message out to the people we serve. For example, the Supreme Court is using Facebook to show people an insider's look of the work lives of the justices as they travel around Florida meeting and performing official duties. No traditional medium can give us this continuous ability to go behind the scenes and highlight the important things our judges do everywhere they go.

Most courts in Florida use Twitter and a few use Facebook.

More specifically, 12 circuits and the Florida Supreme Court used Twitter by the end of 2016. That number grew in the early months of 2017, with two other circuits opening a Twitter account as well as all of the district courts of appeal and the Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA). In general, Twitter is used to “push” information such as high profile case filings, court holiday closures and other court-related events and information of interest to reporters. It also is an effective communication tool for emergency notifications.

Facebook was used by three of the 20 circuits and the Supreme Court by the end of 2016. A district court of appeal, two circuit courts and OSCA joined Facebook in 2017 and other district and circuit courts are considering using it. In general, Facebook is used to highlight court services and initiatives and to enhance the public’s understanding of the courts. For a current list of all social media accounts in use in Florida courts: <http://www.flcourts.org/resources-and-services/education-outreach/social-media.stml>

Another social media platform in use is Instagram, a photo-sharing site. At the close of 2016, only the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit and the Supreme Court used this platform, with OSCA adding its own account in 2017. Additionally, Florida courts are venturing into the world of podcasting. The 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit launched its first podcast in the summer of 2016. The 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit launched its program in February 2017. The Supreme Court expects to launch its first podcast this summer.

***Serious thought should be given at the state level to the creation of a Social Media Specialist position within the State Courts System. Proper use of social media involves photography, photo editing, the gathering of news and data from multiple sources, and staying in touch with all divisions of the court to have access to newsworthy events to be constantly updated on the website and social media accounts. These are time-consuming tasks that should not have to be squeezed into available time among a multitude of other time-sensitive tasks.***

*--Eunice Siabler, 11th Circuit*

Some of the concerns expressed by Florida courts that have not ventured far into the realm of social media include issues of time, staff and budget constraints, public record requirements, ex parte communication, and the demands of other priorities. FCPIO members are working to find solutions to these concerns and may make suggestions to the Florida Supreme Court and the other state courts in the future.

Here is a list of examples detailing the interest in improving websites and the views on social media. Please note it is not a complete list.

*--we completely revamped the website to make it user-friendly for all. The circuit has many users and especially from national and international media. This has resulted in three major news stories and documentaries internationally. We tried to improve access for pro se litigants. **4th Circuit***

*--tabs and the links contained within those tabs were completely reorganized this year. The new tabs do a much better job of highlighting court programs and services (example: Pro Se Family Court Management was previously buried within a generic tab. Now the Self Help Center has its own tab, which directs pro se parties to the services they may require). **8th Circuit***

*--our website was recently redesigned with improved industry-standard search and navigation features and enhanced content. In addition, the new website design makes it easy to view on mobile devices, such as a cell phone or tablet. The website design is a work in progress, with continuing improvements, such as the ability to request a court interpreter online, planned for future revisions. **11th Circuit***

*--we are in the process of redesigning our website to make information more accessible to the public. **12th Circuit***

*--the court is spearheading a complete web page redesign to provide greater access. **4th District Court of Appeal***

*--we are deeply concerned about the potential for the public to comment inappropriately on social media and for parties to engage in ex parte communication with the judiciary. Our staff is limited ... and we have not been able to justify this as a priority given all of the responsibilities that we have. We do have a Twitter account and have tweeted about court closures before. **3rd Circuit***

*--our Facebook page, launched last year, has been a success. We have more than 400 page likes but they are hard-earned ones or, to put it another way, we didn't ask anyone to like our page, they did it on their own. Our reaches have been more than 3,000 for single posts, such as one involving video clips made for a judge heavily involved in Unified Family Court. While originally the people liking our page were the usual suspects, such as staff, we continue to attract different types of people. For instance, after we posted a video of dogs-in-training using our facilities over a weekend to familiarize themselves with offices, folks who like training dogs liked our page. The more interesting a post is the more likely it is to draw a "like". We are careful not to post anything that calls into question what we are doing. For instance, we stay away from posting employee get-togethers involving food because the first thing someone will ask is 'Are my taxpayer dollars paying for that slice of pizza?' We are also learning that maintaining active social media accounts can become time-consuming. **6th Circuit***

*--no social media accounts and we are not sure what direction we will take on this topic. Presently, we think our court has other priorities that rank above social media. **10th Circuit***

*--the biggest challenge is finding the time to devote to social media without neglecting other more critical duties. Facebook may be simple to implement but if done right (timely and consistently) it is labor intensive. **18th Circuit***

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## **PART II. IN THE NEWS...**

### **... getting the story out aka working with reporters**

Most courts in Florida take steps to get media coverage of positive events, things like drug court graduations and other ceremonies related to specialty courts, adoption ceremonies, and investitures. These steps often began with the most basic of exchanges: court PIOs talk to reporters, building relationships of trust as well as enhancing understanding of court procedures and improving the quality of stories. Other tools to disseminate information and news include websites, e-mail, press releases and social media.

***“We have a philosophy of working with our media rather than ‘managing’ media. The Central Florida Media Committee has been a wonderful forum for discussing issues and reaching mutual understanding and compromises.”***

*--Michelle Kennedy, 18th Circuit*

Throughout Florida, court PIOs report being both pro-active and responsive when it comes to media relations.

But, just as Florida’s circuit jurisdictions run the gamut in geographic size and population density, so too do they run the gamut when it comes to media presence and news generation. Some circuits cover a lot of area and include several counties but have few if any large media outlets. In contrast, other circuits, compact in area and including only one or two counties, have several large media outlets competing with each other in their coverage of the courts. One size will never fit all in Florida.

The list below highlights some of the ways in which courts across Florida work with reporters. Again, this list is a partial one only.

*--we are responsive to the requests from and needs of the media ... we have increased the number of press releases provided to the media; these releases have generated positive coverage of our courts. **1st Circuit***

*--for a trial with national attention, the circuit personnel pre-planned and met with the media to coordinate the press rights with the due process rights of the defendants. The media have access without impacting jurors, witnesses and defendant trial rights. **2nd Circuit***

*--our communities are small and our newspapers are small. Because of the extent of our judges' community involvement and the nature of our newspapers, positive stories happen organically. **3rd Circuit***

*--this circuit has close ties to all local media by representation of a media representative elected by all media to inquire and discuss any issues. **4th Circuit***

*--the media point of contact has worked to open channels of communication with local media throughout the five-county circuit. Visiting with local media and being available to answer questions related to the court or to offer information and education on issues that are of concern to the media. **5th Circuit***

*--the full-time PIO attends court hearings where media coverage is anticipated so as to be available for questions and also distributes press releases and gives interviews as needed. **7th Circuit***

*--for members of the media who do not routinely cover court events within the circuit, the PIO will typically meet with the media representative prior to the court event and explain court procedures and processes. Press releases are sometimes used to convey positive information such as the opening of the Self Help Center and National Adoption Day. Social media (specifically Twitter) may be used to highlight positive stories as well, such as Veterans Treatment Court graduations. Twitter may often be used in conjunction with the press release to broaden the outreach. **8th Circuit***

*--we have an excellent working relationship with our local news media. For more than two years we have required court-issued media credentialing. **9th Circuit***

*--the local media is well aware of the do's and don'ts when covering court events. Whenever a new reporter requests court access I provide the media Administrative Order as a reference and/or explain the court's media policies and procedures to them. Over the years, I have reached out to the local media to promote various court programs that offer help to the public such as Civil Mediation, Family Mediation, Probate Coordinator, and Guardianship Monitor. **10th Circuit***

*--we notify media contacts of 'success stories,' particularly in conjunction with related events. As an example, the media was notified of a family who was willing to be interviewed during the National Adoption Day Celebration. We also had a Stand Down for Veterans event for homeless and low-income veterans who needed to resolve existing county fines and fees. Our PIO*

*coordinated with a participant who was willing to be interviewed. He also arranged radio and TV interviews for the trial court administrator, chief judge, Veterans' Treatment Court presiding judge and the county judge who presided over the Stand Down event. **13th Circuit***

*--we are developing a brochure about our circuit's practices and processes. **14th Circuit***

*--the Court's Twitter account is updated regularly regarding court activities and special events and other matters of interest to the media and the public. Press releases are also distributed to the media on a regular basis to inform them of upcoming events and/or the implementation of innovative programs. The court held a Workshop Planning Meeting in 2016 with local media outlets and will move forward with coordinating the workshop in 2017 in an attempt to strengthen relations between the court and the media. **15th Circuit***

*--our circuit uses press releases and face-to-face interaction. We have a handful of media representatives who are stationed at our main courthouse every day. **17th Circuit***

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### **PART III. HOW WE COMMUNICATE ...**

#### **... with students, the public, and other branches of government**

Court PIOs reported what they do in the areas of educational outreach and relationship building with other areas of government. These two arenas of communication traditionally have been extremely important for courts. This importance has not diminished at all in our world of clicks, links, tweets, posts and snaps.

#### **EDUCATING PEOPLE ABOUT COURTS: From courthouse tours to town hall meetings**

*Overview about tours and educational programs for students and adults*

All across Florida, in every county, every circuit and every district, our state courts welcome students and adults who visit to learn about the judicial branch of government and its important role in our lives.

***"The number of ... tours, coupled with speakers we have sent to various places, increased more than 40 percent, from 2015 to 2016.***

*--Stephen Thompson, 6th Circuit*

All state courts in Florida have "tours" for student groups but while all courts are responsive to requests from schools, many

have gone further, investing time and thought into structuring effective and creative tour programs. Some tours feature presentations by prosecutors, defense attorneys and judges, while others include mock trials or observation of court proceedings followed by a question and answer session with a judge or other official. Most circuits also arrange tours, presentations, roundtable discussions, open houses and town hall meetings for adult groups, whether they be local officials, attorneys, veterans, leadership groups or simply interested citizens. In some courts, judges agree to be “shadowed” by a student or an adult. The Florida Supreme Court promotes knowledge of its tour program by posting information and photographs on its Facebook page.

The list below highlights a few of the educational programs that courts across Florida have organized. Again, the list is intended only to show the range of what state courts do to help the people they serve better understand how the judiciary works and is not a complete picture reflecting the scope of what is happening, either in the circuits and districts listed or in any of the other 20 circuits, the five District Courts of Appeal, and the Florida Supreme Court.

*--an extensive public educational component serves approximately 3,500 students annually, outreach to all middle schools providing guided tours and mock trial initiatives; internship program (25 plus annually) from high school, undergraduate and graduate and law school interns each year. **2nd Circuit***

*--quarterly Veterans Court “lunch and learn” meetings, open to citizens, treatment providers, local officials; annual drug court “open house” for citizens and all interested parties; quarterly county court criminal justice roundtable for the general public and local law enforcement; quarterly “public policy institute” for Marion County general public, local officials and criminal and civil justice stakeholders; quarterly Family Law Advisory Group meetings, open to general public and legislative delegation. **5th Circuit***

*--Example of one recent week: presentations on how a trial court works were given to junior high students not performing at grade level, third-graders and junior high students with neuropsychological-processing difficulties, such as Attention Deficit Disorder. **6th Circuit***

*--we assisted 150-200 college students who attended court as part of a class assignment. **7th Circuit***

*--Inside the Courts: a community outreach and education program taught by judges is held over four evenings during the spring. This year marks the 20th year of this program, which attracts up to 200 people a night. **9th Circuit***

*--Twitter Town Halls: students at a local high school sent in hundreds of tweets and a judge answered a dozen or so in a live forum. **9th Circuit***

*--visiting students and court dignitaries and elected officials from throughout the United States and other nations frequently participate in customized educational programs, observing court proceedings, participating in Q&A sessions with the presiding judge and other justice partners, tours of internal workings, such as administrative operations, electronic document management or specialty courts. **11th Circuit***

*--we try to customize tours to meet the needs of the group; when teen students tour a component includes a representative from Teen Court. And when senior citizens tour, they meet with someone from Elder Justice. **13th Circuit***

*--the Citizen's Criminal Justice Academy, initially instituted by one of our prior judges, features speakers from local, state and federal agencies in a 10-week course. The Academy is free and is offered on a quarterly basis, with each class limited to 50 participants, who meet once a week from 6-9 at the courthouse and other locations. **15th Circuit***

*--we also work with scout leaders to coordinate annual presentations that meet the criteria for merit badges. We have hosted open houses, inviting the public to meet judges and staff on Saturdays. **18th Circuit***

*--when students are present for an oral argument, the panel will visit with them and discuss the appellate process. **2nd District Court of Appeal.***

*--The Court and the American Board of Trial Advocates organize high school groups' visits to oral arguments. Students are sent copies of the briefs in advance. When they arrive, the Marshal talks to them about the organization of the court and the responsibilities of the judges and court officials. After the arguments, the judges participate in a Q&A with the students and the teachers. A recording of the court session is later mailed to the teacher. **3rd District Court of Appeal.***

## **OUR PARTNERS: Judges & court staff work with other governmental officials**

*Overview about relations with partners in other branches and levels of government*

Leaders of all Florida's circuit courts – judges and administrators – actively communicate with county board members, clerks of court, justice partners like state attorneys and public defenders, legislative delegations and other local and regional officials. In smaller circuits, relationships develop naturally. In larger circuits, judges and court administrators develop

relationships by being active on joint committees and attending other meetings, both regular and scheduled, as well as by inviting officials to visit courthouses and “shadow” judges.

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#### **PART IV. SPEAKING WITH ONE VOICE ...**

##### **... KEY messages drive home a unified point about the importance of courts**

The PIOs described what steps they take to reinforce five fundamental messages about the essential role courts play in our democracy and civil society. Identified in the Communication Plan as “KEY court messages,” these descriptions outline the reason courts exist and must be widely understood if the foundation of public trust on which courts rest is to remain strong and stable.

Florida’s court PIOs uniformly report that efforts were made to inform judges and court staff about the five KEY Court messages provided in the Communication Plan. The messages were shared in meetings and via e-mail. Most courts have also taken steps, where appropriate, to incorporate the messages into court publications and other material, such as press releases and the bottom of e-mails.

Some circuits have posted the messages online or in social media.

Efforts to reinforce the fundamental principles of the courts – whether they are

***The Chief Judge does a ‘state of the courts’ presentation to local bar associations and civic groups, addressing the needs of the branch and communicating relevant legislative issues. The chief judge and trial court administrator meet regularly with the Board of County Commissioners to communicate our needs and provide information and updates on court programs. Our circuit maintains a close working relationship with the clerk of court, state attorney, public defender, sheriff, police chiefs and other local officials to collaborate on common issues.***

*--Mike Moore, 13th Circuit*

expressed in the plan’s five “KEY Court Messages” or in the branch’s official mission and vision statements or even in a locally adopted statement and motto – are not new. But, at the same time, the efforts are a work in progress. The FCPIO created a Speaking With One Voice Committee to work on ways to help Florida courts always reinforce the core truths about the judiciary that it needs the public to know and value and pass on to future generations. The committee created communication templates to help court staff write press releases, media

advisories, and court statements. These templates are part of a larger PIO Toolkit currently in development that contains information, best practices, guidelines, and more that will assist courts with their communication responsibilities.

*--the KEY court messages are integral to everything we do so while we may not have specifically called them 'KEY court messages' we certainly convey all of them on a regular basis as we carry out our duties. Judges speak of these fundamentals on a regular basis and the court administrator addresses them continuously with staff. **3rd Circuit.***

***Sample messages and lay-friendly language were provided to division directors to discuss with the staff and judges in their divisions, to ensure speaking with one voice among departments in web content and court communications. This continues to be a work in progress. Making things easier for judges and court staff by providing them with samples and templates, so they don't have to reinvent the wheel, should help.***

*--Eunice Sigler, 11th Circuit*

*--the circuit has utilized social media to convey these KEY Court Messages, whenever appropriate. Staff has been actively incorporating these KEY Court Messages in all their internal and external correspondence. Updated brochures and other printed material are compiled using language that incorporates the 5 Key Court Messages. **9th Circuit.***

*--when we are able, we weave key court messages into letters and emails. **19th Circuit***

*--we placed the branch vision and mission statements on a wall in our lobby. **2nd DCA***

*--we have included the messages into our Law Day materials and are in the process of placing them on our website. **5th DCA***

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## **PART V. INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS ...**

### **... e-mails and meetings, surveys and suggestion boxes**

For the most part, Florida's courts use traditional tools such as e-mails, meetings and newsletters to communicate internally. Courts also use websites to communicate internally as well as externally; some use Twitter and instant messaging. The Florida Supreme Court successfully used both Twitter and Facebook to get out information to staff and the public

about emergency court operations during Hurricane Matthew in the fall of 2016, in addition to more traditional means such as the Court’s website and its emergency telephone hotline.

In an effort to make sure the information is flowing both ways, a few courts report using staff surveys and suggestion boxes. Some courts recognize excellence with award ceremonies and provide training in “lunch and learn” events.

***The new Court Communications Plan offered a great benchmark by which to measure our communication efforts. The circuit has had a Communications Officer for several years and had already accomplished many of the Year one and Year Two goals described. However, the plan also offered an opportunity to assess our progress and see where we need to focus our efforts, so as to give us new goals to achieve in 2017.***

*--Ludi Lelis, 7th Circuit*

Communication also flows among the courts; court leaders and staff meet with their counterparts in other courts in meetings of chief judges, trial court administrators and PIOs. FCPIO fosters the sharing of communications-related information among all divisions of the state courts system in its annual meeting, its regular telephone conference meetings and by special telephone meetings set up by the Supreme Court to address particular situations, such as newspaper investigations that might affect more than one circuit or district. These exchanges are viewed as valuable and productive.

*--for all special events there is an After Action Review process to capture the results for continuous improvements for all subsequent similar events. For example, after the recent Frasch trial, media planning that occurred prior to the event will be reviewed and improvements for future proceedings will be incorporated in future policy and planning meetings. **2nd Circuit***

*--court administration conducted a survey of its employees to get input about their job satisfaction, organizational climate and other areas of concern. **3rd Circuit***

*--our human resources department manages Suggestion Boxes at each courthouse location to receive anonymous feedback and suggestions. **6th Circuit***

*--information sharing is a key component of our court system and is a primary reason why we consider ourselves a high performing circuit. ... the launching of the courts’ Communication Plan has raised awareness of the importance of internal communication so management wants to make sure we use multiple and numerous methods to share information with judges and staff. **10th Circuit***

**CONCLUSION: Delivering Our Message**  
***achievements and goals***

Florida’s courts have taken the Communication Plan very seriously and accomplished a great deal in the first year of implementation. Across Florida, many efforts were championed by the PIO in each court. Whether they have other duties in their courts or function as a PIO only, these court staff have worked diligently to take concrete steps to strengthen the public’s knowledge of and trust in the Florida court system. When asked to rate their implementation effort in 2016 on a scale of 1 to 10, the average rating was an 8.

***We have a pretty strong communication effort among the FCPIO members. The email blasts, the chance to work together on committees, etc., have been so helpful to me in my capacity as a PIO. I believe what we have in place is great and very effective.***

*--Meredith Bush  
17th Circuit*

Although individual initiative is central to success, it’s important to note that the PIOs have provided each other with support and collaboration through their statewide non-profit education group, the FCPIO.

When asked what achievements they are most proud of this year, to name just a few of the most common, courts noted the following: improving websites, developing a communications committee, creating or expanding educational programs, developing social media accounts, starting a podcast series, improving internal communications, and developing feedback mechanisms and employee surveys.

When asked what their primary goal is for 2017, many courts used words like “expand” “improve” “increase.”

*--we may try Twitter for hard-news releases, informing the media primarily of upcoming high-profile cases. **6th Circuit***

*--we would love to learn from industry experts how to implement a targeted strategy to increase our social media capacity to deliver KEY core messages. **9th Circuit***

*--2017 goals: to expand upon the circuit’s already successful community outreach and educational programs and continue to enhance web content on its redesigned website – to*

*include a new video podcast series and expanded social media presence. There is always more to be done and the opportunities are endless given the proper resources. **11th Circuit***

*--while Facebook has garnered a lot of attention, I am most proud of work behind the scenes to have inaccurate and negative news stories corrected. **18th Circuit***

*--two of our judges were featured on ABC World News Tonight in a piece for National Adoption Day ceremonies; we have 100 more people following us on Twitter than we did a year ago and we are working on a Social Media Policy for our circuit to expand outreach. **20th Circuit***

*--to continue to work on the website and possibly create a communications committee. **16<sup>th</sup> Circuit***

As Florida's court leaders have consistently shown they understand, "court communication" is much more than coping with high-profile cases – although such cases certainly require great care and can consume days and weeks of staff time, whether the legal dispute is over a presidential election gone awry or a family torn apart by the treatment of a loved one in a medical case that somehow spirals into the political arena at the highest level of our government or a locally sensitive case that attracts no interest in the neighboring county.

These kinds of "center-stage" cases aside, court communication must always be a core concern of court leaders because courts need the trust of the people they serve and that trust depends on the kind of public knowledge and understanding that is promoted by court communication.