



To: ALA Idea Award Panel  
From: Sarah Evenson, President of ALAMN  
Re: Idea Award Submission

---

The ALA and ALAMN's mission is a single statement summarizing why we exist. But more than just stating why we exist, our mission statement also helps to outline the bigger purpose of the regular activities and routine things our members do every day. It also explains what impact the ALA and ALAMN want to have and what we want to be remembered for. Finally, it provides guidance to keep our organizations heading in the right direction as we experience change. However, just having a mission statement is not enough. People need to know our mission statement exists, understand it, and see how it impacts them in what they do in order for it to be effective and meaningful.

### **Innovation**

To see how well we were engaging our committee/SIG chairs in the mission of ALA and ALAMN, the board did a short survey last year of its leaders. We realized quickly many people felt they knew what our mission was, but could not exactly articulate it. Most thought it was about networking and connecting people. Others felt it was professionalism and education. While all those are a part of ALAMN's mission statement, they better describe the results or the things we do because of our mission statement.

The ALA and ALAMN share a common mission, which is:

- ) **IMPROVE** the quality of management in legal services organizations;
- ) **PROMOTE** and enhance the competence and professionalism of legal administrators and all members of the management team; and
- ) **REPRESENT** professional legal management and managers to the legal community and to the community at large.

The board wanted to find a way not only to improve people's knowledge and awareness of our mission statement, but to also recognize those members and business partners that were contributing towards us actually fulfilling our mission.

It was decided we needed to do something simple, memorable, lasting, tangible, and meaningful. The result was the creation of the ALAMN Challenge Coin. Board members each month hand out ALAMN challenge coins to ALAMN members and business partners that have done something to improve, promote or represent the ALAMN.



The idea stemmed from growing up in a military family. Challenge coins have a long history and are widely used by all branches of the United States military as an award or as a means to identify membership in an organization or to recognize the special achievement of a military member. It is a tradition for all members to carry their unit coin at all times and challenge others to display their coins. It is point of pride and a token of success the type and number of challenge coins you receive throughout your military career.

### **Development**

The initial planning for the project was simple and straight forward and took less than one month. In one meeting we decided we liked the coin idea and worked with a company to create a design that highlighted our mission statement and the ALAMN logo. The cost of 110 coins was \$240. Due to the low cost of the coins no special fundraising was required and the money was taken out of our regular budget.

Once we received the coins we immediately started to pass them out. Every board member each month is responsible for handing out one coin along with a thank you note to the recipient recognizing their specific efforts or contributions. If a board member did not feel that there was someone deserving of a coin they were not required to hand one out.

After handing out coins the first couple of times, we realized something explaining the history and meaning of the challenge coins was needed. As a result we created a backer that we attached the coin to when sending/handing it to the recipient.



Please accept this challenge coin as a token of our appreciation and in recognition for your efforts to IMPROVE, PROMOTE and REPRESENT the ALAMN.

#### Short History of Challenge Coins

Challenge Coins are widely used by all branches of the United States military as an award or as a means to identify membership in an organization or to recognize the special achievement of a military member. It became a tradition for all members to carry their unit coin at all times and challenge others to display their coins.

### **Engagement**

As President of ALAMN I was the leader of this initiative. The entire ALAMN Board was involved with this project by selecting and handing out coins each month. Each month board members report to our Administrative Director who he/she handed a coin out to. Our Administrative Director keeps a running list of everyone who has received a coin so we know if we have handed out multiple coins to one person. The coin recipient list is sent out with our monthly board packet of information for review before the board meeting.

We purposefully launched this initiative without advertising and promoting the same through tradition communication methods like our newsletter or social media. We wanted this to have an “exclusive” feel that allowed the interest and excitement to spread through a grassroots style communication. We also did not want people to feel like it was a traditional award that we were handing out and that people had to do something specific to get a coin. What ended up happening is members and business partners would see a board member handing out a coin to someone and ask, “What is that?” Or, “What did you do to get that?” Word spread like wildfire and people started connecting and talking more about what they do for the ALAMN and really started recognizing each other’s efforts and contributions.

### **Advancement**

The results that we have seen in just the 10 months we have been handing out coins are amazing. If you were to go up to one of our members and ask what the mission statement of the ALAMN is they would be much more likely to be able to verbalize the mission and at a minimum be able to state the key words of improve, promote, and represent.

A positive side effect of this initiative is people are asking more questions and finding new ways to be involved in the chapter. Our membership and leadership engagement and retention has improved also. Typically in the past we have had to twist people’s arms to take on a leadership

role or stay on as a chair of a committee. This year, we have much less difficulty finding people to take on these leadership roles and have less roles to fill due to people wanting to leave their positions before their term is up.

This program has also created a “buzz” within our organization. People are talking and engaging more with each other. Members and business partners are asking, “Hey, what do I need to do to get one of those coins?” The challenge coin has also helped to support the theme of ALAMN this year of Building Lasting Relationships. The coin is another tool for us to connect with our members and business partners in a very direct, purposeful, and meaningful way to show our appreciation for their support.

An unintended side-effect is the coin recipients are prominently displaying their coins and thank you cards in their offices which are causing their attorneys and staff to ask them about it. This is giving our members the opportunity to better explain to their firm what ALAMN is and be able to boast about what they did to get a coin. It also opens the door to demonstrate to member law firms the importance of its support and participation in the organization and the great leadership opportunities it is providing its employees.

Finally, the direct feedback we received from our coin recipients demonstrates the positive impact this initiative has had on them personally. I am providing just a few excerpts from emails we received after recipients were given their coin(s):

When I received my coins, I thought “What a great idea and what a nice surprise!” The coins made me smile 😊. I appreciated that someone recognized the work I had been doing on BPCC/BPAC and that they took the time to tell me in a thoughtful and meaningful way. I keep my coins, along with the thank you notes I received from Kelly Thaemert and Abby Rooney, on my desk. When people ask about them, I tell them about ALAMN and how much this association has helped me over the past few years!

I like the coin idea – it was a nice surprise to receive! I don’t do anything for the recognition, I do it because I enjoy it and like being a part of something bigger so to be recognized meant a lot.

I loved receiving the coins. I maybe shouldn’t say this, but I received two of them. Phil Rush gave me one personally during CLI. Shortly after that I received another one by mail from Sarah Evenson. Both the personal comments made by Phil and the written note from Sarah were very meaningful. It was very touching. I keep one coin on my desk and I carry the other one with me in my briefcase.

Receiving the coin made me feel great! Very appreciated and I was so surprised to get it. I love the tradition of challenge coins and think it’s a great way to recognize people!



Because of the success of this initiative, the board decided to make this an on-going program. Each year we are going to change the design of the coin. This will allow us to highlight a new initiative each year and also create a tangible memento our members can collect and keep throughout their career.

Finally, during our annual ALAMN conference in March I will be recognizing and highlighting the contributions of our 2017 coin recipients during my presentation. We hope this will inspire others to reach out to congratulate those coin recipients and also consider getting more involved themselves.

It is our excellent members that make the ALAMN an exceptional organization. Our member's excellence is our excellence! We want to continue to encourage members to find ways to share their excellence with others and help us accomplish our mission. This challenge coin has been and will continue to help us to **Build Lasting Relationships** and **IMPROVE – PROMOTE – REPRESENT** the ALA & ALAMN! Thank you for your time and consideration.

The following link will provide you access to the following individual files: (1) picture of coin – front and back; (2) coin backer; (3) group picture of some of the 2017 ALAMN Challenge Coin recipients. <https://1drv.ms/f/s!ArjFp5tNbJcMn0v4DSaqZpitK6BZ>