



**ASAE & The Center for Association Leadership
FY 2008-09 Industry Partner/Consultant Needs Assessment
Executive Summary**

The FY 2008-09 Industry Partner/Consultant Needs Assessment was conducted in December 2008. This is the third year that industry partners were surveyed separate from association professionals using an instrument custom designed to address their unique needs and desires. In previous years they were sent the same questionnaire as all other members.

Industry Insights, a Columbus, Ohio market research firm reporting to the Industry & Market Research Department, conducted the study. A total of 3462 industry partners and consultants were sent an e-mail asking them to participate in this study. Two follow-up e-mails were sent to non-respondents after the initial deployment, with one after a week and the other after two weeks. This methodology was similar to the one employed in previous years. In hopes of increasing the poor response rate among consultants and industry partners in the past, we shortened the questionnaire significantly but this did not alter the outcome with just 5% of these members responding, equivalent to the response rate last year. In contrast, association members generally respond at a rate of 15-18%.

Of the 157 respondents, 63 were consultants (40%) and 94 were industry partners (60%). This is a significant difference from 2007 when 90% of the 185 respondents were industry partners and 10% were consultants. One reason for this disparity is likely to be the increased activity and visibility of the new consultant's section their push to serve consultants through their list server, special meetings programs and activities helping them to enhance identification with this community.

This report provides the results showing broken out by type (industry partner or consultant) along with a benchmark of all respondents against results found in the previous two years.

Summary of Major Findings with an Industry Partner Focus

Changes in the composition of respondents made little difference in the findings. In general, results are not significantly different from those found in previous years. There are no significant differences in ratings of specific opportunities, overall importance and satisfaction, level of involvement and demographic characteristics.

- Overall satisfaction for all respondents is 3.7 with Industry Partners slightly higher than consultants at 3.8. These results are not significantly different from one another nor a significant improvement over 2007 when the rating was 3.6.
- Looking at ratings of value for dues, there is no difference between consultants and industry partners, both giving an overall rating of 3.6, virtually unchanged since 2006.
- The three most important opportunities available through membership remain the most important to Industry Partners and Consultants and are ranked in the same order as last year:
 1. Learning about issues that are important to association executives
 2. Personal access to members
 3. Having access to information that is provided to association executives
- In the list of opportunities available through membership only three of the 13 items are more important to industry partners than to consultants. Their satisfaction with these items are also somewhat better:
 1. Exhibit Opportunities 3.6 vs. 1.9
 2. Purchasing member lists 3.1 vs. 1.8
 3. Sponsorship opportunities 2.7 vs. 1.8
- The gap between importance and satisfaction in “Providing expert consultation to members or others through networking with members at events or electronically” has increased significantly since last year when the gap was -.05, up to -.09 this year. Other negative gaps have also increased, most notably in the items covering access to association members.
- Awareness of the IPA has increased among consultants but has remained the same among industry partners at 55%. As suggested in the response rate, awareness among consultants of the Consultant’s Section has more than doubled.
- Demographic information about respondents suggests that industry partner respondents are longer-term members (47% of IP respondents joined before 1993 compared to just 18% of all members);

The continuing very poor response rate, coupled with the declining response among industry partners and the negligible differences in results over the three years this study has been conducted, it is recommended that, unless there are significant changes to either the benefits or services offered to industry partners we do not repeat this study in the current fiscal year. Alternatively we could ask only the overall satisfaction and overall value questions in a very, very short evaluation.