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2021

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ASAE

ASAE and the ASAE Research Foundation work together to bring the most comprehensive collection of services and resources to association professionals. ASAE's members manage trade associations, individual membership societies, and voluntary organizations across the United States and in nearly 50 countries. The ASAE Research Foundation provides learning, future-focused and strategic research and knowledge resources, and community for association professionals. The Foundation offers association professionals an array of essential services and resources that identify the path to success.

Our Cause (why we exist) ASAE helps associations transform society through the power of collaboration.

Our Value (what we do) ASAE connects great ideas and great people to inspire leadership and achievement within the association community.

Our Promise (how we serve our stakeholders) ASAE provides exceptional experiences, a vibrant community, and essential tools that make you and your organization more successful.

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features

"I personally believe in taking some calculated risks when designing that DEI business model."

—Yolanda Chase

Chief Change Makers

Organizations have been working to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion for decades, often in a cycle of progress followed by retraction. After an increased focus on racial justice in 2020, many associations are hoping to seed long-lasting change through a new C-suite position: chief diversity officer.

BY RASHEEDA CHILDRESS



What "Digital First" Means Today

It's more than just hosting an online conference and supporting remote work. Through more than a year of pandemic disruption, associations have found that shifting their whole culture to a digital mindset can bring about the changes necessary to operate flexibly and virtually for the long term.

BY MARK ATHITAKIS



The Future of Membership Is Now

Looking at membership in a new way means being inclusive at every level and reimagining what a member is—and needs. Definitions and outdated molds need to be redefined and recast for a sustainable, holistic, and realistic membership strategy.

BY LISA BOYLAN

departments



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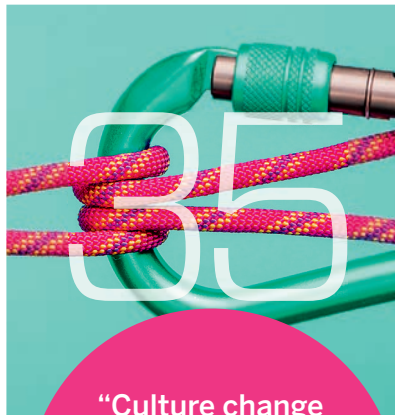
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The Storytelling Continues

One of the things that makes covering associations fun is that we get to tell stories about great teams and the amazing things they accomplish for their communities. The two of us have had a grand time doing that together on the pages of this magazine, with a slew of talented colleagues, over the past 10 years. ASAE's flagship magazine goes back many decades further, and the publication of this last issue of *Associations Now* is a milestone worth noting.

But milestones are just markers along the road, and the AN team will continue the storytelling in digital channels that are being reinvented as this issue goes to press. The timing feels right in many ways. The pandemic has loosened its grip, people are returning to in-person events and shared offices (we'll be back at 1575 I Street soon), and organizations are crafting the future out of what they've learned over the past year and a half, especially about how to engage with their communities digitally. ASAE President and CEO Susan Robertson, CAE, provides her perspective on that in a guest column on page 10.

As part of that change, we've taken on new roles. As the new editor-in-chief of *Associations Now*, Samantha Whitehorne will lead our editorial team in covering the big challenges in association management and sharing the practical solutions and advice you look for from your peers in the community. In her broader role as chief content officer, Julie Shoop will look for ways to make more thoughtful connections between the journalism published in *Associations Now* and other ASAE content resources to provide greater value and deeper insights from the knowledge shared through ASAE's many content channels.

So the team is still here, working together in new ways—just like you and your association, we're willing to bet. We know your team is ready to move into the future, and so are we.

Julie Shoop
Chief Content Officer
jshoop@asaecenter.org



Samantha Whitehorne
Editor-in-Chief
swhitehorne@asaecenter.org



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Turning a Page

As we embrace a digital-first future, content is still king. **By Susan Robertson, CAE**

BUSINESSES—AND ASSOCIATIONS LIKE ASAE—don't reach their century mark without keenly observing and responding to changing trends and market conditions. As tempting as it is for organizations to keep doing what has always worked in the past, there are typically signs that portend an end to the status quo and the need to rethink and evolve.

With ASAE's approach to content publishing, all of the signs pointing to a need for change are staring us squarely in the face. Over the past several years of member satisfaction surveys, ASAE's members have indicated a strong, growing preference for receiving content through digital channels. Advertiser interest has likewise shifted from print to digital: Fiscal year 2021 marked the first time ASAE's advertising revenue in the digital space eclipsed print revenue.

Our new strategy is focused on refreshing our direction and business models, increasing our value proposition to members, taking the organization to the next level, and modeling change for the association community.

These shifts mirror global trends in media consumption, in the role of social media as aggregator of news and other content, and in how businesses and advertisers relate to and court consumers. The COVID-19 pandemic only accelerated these preexisting publishing trends.

Consistent with these new realities, this edition of *Associations Now* marks the last for our storied flagship print magazine. We are so proud of this publication's longevity, the countless ways it has shaped our community's thinking and informed our processes, and the many talented writers and contributors who built its influence and reputation.

Rather than mourn the passing of this venerable magazine, the ASAE staff and leadership are looking forward to expanding our digital assets—in the *Associations Now* brand and across

ASAE—to best serve the needs of the association leaders and industry partners who support us. Content remains king. Starting this fall, we will begin to roll out new digital media options that will create unique, focused, and valuable opportunities for readers to access our content and for advertisers to engage with their customers. The purpose of any new distribution channel or new iteration

of a traditional format will be to drive deep and meaningful engagement within our community.

ASAE's strategic plan gives us the context and the roadmap for transitioning to a digital-first organization. Our new strategy is focused on refreshing our direction and business models, increasing our value proposition to members, taking the organization to the next level, and modeling change for the association community. This is a three-year strategy, but we are making a lot of progress in a short amount of time. This new approach to content publishing marks just one of the many specific, concrete ways that we're seeing the strategy shift our organizational focus, as well as our alignment of resources to best meet the needs of our members and partners.

The biggest change we hope you'll notice in the coming months is the new range of options you have to access the content you want and need. In the near term, ASAE will be optimizing and streamlining content delivery to ensure we're making it accessible to a variety of audiences in a variety of channels. Importantly, we're striving for digital-first, not digital-only, meaning if there are opportunities where publishing in print makes sense, that's exactly what we'll do.

Of course, all content needs an audience, and we'll be listening closely to make sure the trends we're following mirror our community's actual preferences for engagement. Thank you, readers and advertisers, for being with us on this journey to transformational change.

SUSAN ROBERTSON, CAE, is president and CEO of ASAE.
Email: srobertson@asaecenter.org





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The A List

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LYNETTE BRADLEY-BAKER, CAE

- SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,
PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND ENGAGEMENT
- AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES OF PHARMACY
- CRYSTAL CITY, VIRGINIA

MY THREE GOALS FOR 2021

1. Keep my commitment to and focus on my self-care
2. Support and be patient with my rising high school senior as he initiates the college application process
3. Be a responsive and reliable team member as we all move toward post-pandemic work life

WHO I'M FOLLOWING ON TWITTER

@AACPharmacy, @TheAJPE,
@BreneBrown, @thehill,
@theNASciences,
@DayOneDrew, @PharmacistsfHL,
@Pharm4Me, @umsop

ON MY DESK RIGHT NOW

Work-related folders, strategic plan draft, two association journals, three books, pictures of family members

MY MEDIA MIX

Podcasts: Red Table Talk, Silence Is Not an Option, Unlocking Us

TV: All American, Cobra Kai, Ozark, Queen of the South, Queen Sugar, Sweet Magnolias, This Is Us, Virgin River

Magazines: Academic Pharmacy Now, Essence, Women's Health

THE BEST ADVICE I EVER GOT

Always be yourself because it is really tough to be someone else.

IF I WEREN'T DOING THIS, I'D ...

... own a pharmacy or some other healthcare-related business.

WHAT I DO WHEN I'M NOT AT WORK

Read, exercise, connect with friends and family, listen to music, and watch sports or play board games with my son and husband

Ask
the
CEO

TOP ASSOCIATION EXECs IN CONVERSATION WITH MEMBERS

Amy Pitter, president and CEO of the Massachusetts Society of CPAs, answers questions from member Victoria Shen, a student at Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts.



AMY PITTER,
PRESIDENT AND
CEO OF THE
MASSACHUSETTS
SOCIETY OF CPAS

What advice do you have for college students who are entering the accounting profession?

Accounting students are in high demand for jobs, and a first job is an important step. Every business needs an accountant, whether they consult with a firm or have an in-house team, so CPAs and potential CPAs can choose from a variety of career paths. Gather lots of information about your options and think about your long-term goals. Culture counts, so make sure to consider your work atmosphere in your decision. And remember to network with MSCPA—it's the best way to get referrals and opportunities down the road.

What skills do students need to have a successful career in accounting?

Firm and company leaders want staff members who can show value quickly as a team leader, client contact, and superuser of new technologies. To distinguish yourself, you must understand new technologies like data science, system controls, and blockchain. Critical thinking and communication skills are key for future leaders, so you'll also need to interpret

and explain technical data to clients or non-accountants. Lastly—and perhaps most important—are interpersonal skills. All accountants must be comfortable working with diverse teams, but successful leaders do this while inspiring confidence in others.

Students often have misconceptions about an accounting career. How would you go about clearing some of these misconceptions?

Accountants are in the people business. It's perfect for natural leaders who work well with others and are interested in entrepreneurship and technology. All businesses need accounting services—from forensic accounting to entertainment to sports and nonprofits. The profession is dynamic, diverse, rewarding, and vital to our economy.

Change starts by educating people about what a career in accounting really means. We are working to raise awareness with students as young as middle school, so they understand the various opportunities available so they can choose a career path that suits them.

“
To distinguish
yourself,
you must
understand new
technologies
like data
science, system
controls, and
blockchain.”



GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT

SMOOTHER GLOBAL TRAVEL AFTER COVID

Travel Pass app helps air travelers navigate countries' differing entry requirements

REVIVING INTERNATIONAL AIR travel after the pandemic means instituting a host of new processes, from setting safety protocols for passengers to navigating a patchwork of different rules about what travelers can do in each country. There's a common thread among those changes: paperwork, or its digital equivalent.

In fall 2020, the International Air Transport Association, which represents airlines, began exploring the creation of a tool that would provide information about different countries' test and vaccine requirements for travelers and allow travelers to share their vaccine and test information with airlines and government authorities.

"We needed something that would be efficient, would be authenticated, and could be done within the existing framework of how people travel," says Perry Flint, IATA head of corporate communications, USA. "We can't go back to paper processes."

IATA already had a database system called Timatic, which provided verified document requirements for international fliers. But porting that system to a COVID-related one involved discussions with member airlines and governments. Some countries required testing, some were specific about when passengers needed tests, and rules often shifted about who could enter and where.

"There was absolutely no harmonization between what governments were doing," Flint says. "It was

impossible even for the few travelers who were able to travel to know what was going on."

IATA's response, Travel Pass, is an app that uses the Timatic system to provide COVID-related testing and protocol information for each country. It also allows passengers to input verified testing and vaccination information and receive test results. An advisory board of member airlines consulted with IATA about the content and format of the app.

Nearly 50 airlines have agreed to participate in a trial of the app, which was released in April. The next step is to persuade more governments to accept them. At press time, two have formally agreed to use it: Panama and Singapore.

Tools like Travel Pass are a hot-button topic in the United States, where the idea of "vaccine passports" is controversial due to privacy concerns. Flint emphasizes that IATA doesn't endorse the institution of official government databases or government vaccine mandates for air travel.

Rather, Travel Pass is intended to streamline the airport experience once people become more comfortable with air travel and airports become more crowded again. "If a government is going to put in a rule [about entering a country], we can either have a messy situation where everyone carries around pieces of paper that, God help you if you lose it, and stands in airport lines for hours. Or we can have it digitally and not have that situation."—**Mark Athitakis**

COMINGS AND GOINGS

A roundup of new hires and other personnel moves in the association industry

After more than a decade leading the American Institute of Architects, Executive Vice President and CEO **Robert Ivy** announced he will retire at the end of 2021.



Gretchen Cook-Anderson was named associate vice president for diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism at IES Abroad.

Karen Williams, president and CEO of Louisville Tourism, will retire at the end of June.



Marc Anderson was named president and CEO of Visit San Antonio.



Michele Camarco joined the Maine Community Foundation as vice president of finance and CFO.

Management Solutions Plus, Inc., welcomed **Susan DuCoursey** as account executive.

Visit Salt Lake welcomed **Allison Chap-pell** as director of research and analytics.



Donté P. Shannon, FASAE, CAE, was named president and CEO of the Woodworking Machinery Industry Association.

Tiffany Niederwerfer was promoted to vice president of marketing at the Credit Union National Association.

The American Physical Therapy Association named **Carmen Elliott, CAE**, its vice president of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and executive director of the Physical Therapy Fund.

Meghan Risch joined the Professional Convention Management Association as vice president, strategic and corporate communications.

David Hester was appointed director of the Texas Restaurant Association Education Foundation.



Marla Bilonick was selected as president and CEO of the National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders.

The AMC Institute welcomed **Krista LeZotte, CMP, CSEP, DES**, as vice president, events, membership, and education, and **Thomas Pigg** as manager, membership and marketing/communications.

The Endocrine Society welcomed **Kate Fryer** as CEO.

Nicole Porter joined the U.S. Travel Association as vice president, political affairs-PAC and grassroots.



The Academy of General Dentistry named **Colleen Lawler, IOM, CAE**, its new executive director.



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POWER OF A

Powering Up Navajo Nation

UTILITIES COME TOGETHER TO BRING ELECTRICITY TO AN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY

SEVENTY-FIVE PERCENT of all households without electricity are located in one place: Navajo Nation, which spreads across northeast Arizona and parts of Utah and New Mexico. In 2018, Alex Hofmann, vice president of technical and operations services for the American Public Power Association, heard Walter Haase, general manager of the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA), speak about the region's electrification challenges at APPA's annual conference. Immediately after, Hofmann looked into ways to help.

The result is Light Up Navajo, recipient of a 2020 Power of A Summit Award from ASAE. The initiative is similar to the work utilities do after a major storm or fire. In those cases, a variety of utilities come together under a program called "mutual aid" to assist the local firm in clearing downed power lines and restoring power. Hofmann made the same goodwill

appeal to power companies across the country for Light Up Navajo. "We started calling it mutual aid without a storm," he says.

Organizers began by giving potential participants a view of life on the reservation. "The first challenge was helping people understand the nature of the problem," Hofmann says. "We had to bring a group of our members or leaders out to the Navajo Nation and talk about what the conditions were and what it would take" to bring power to residents. In tandem with that, APPA worked with NTUA to determine which households would be the first to benefit.

A \$125,000 grant from APPA helped jump-start the program, but the engine for the initiative was volunteers. The program's pilot, Light Up Navajo I, brought together 120 volunteers from 25 public power companies across the country. That effort connected 230 homes to electricity in six weeks in the spring of 2019. Logistics and harsh Arizona weather presented challenges. "You're getting materials to volunteers in a place with no address," Hofmann says. But the pilot proved the concept and helped APPA determine how best to transfer responsibility for electrification to NTUA.

Since the program began, 600 homes in Navajo Nation have been connected to the grid. Though Light Up Navajo II, scheduled for spring of 2020, was canceled due to the pandemic, NTUA was able to access funds via the CARES Act for future efforts. The next project, Light Up Navajo III, is scheduled for early 2022.

With approximately 15,000 homes still unconnected, there's still a lot of work to be done. But Hofmann is optimistic that resolving the problem is less about logistics and more about generating enough goodwill to help. "We're trying to make sure that people understand that it is a problem," he says. "But there's a solution and we're all working to solve it together."—**M.A.**



GRASSROOTS AMBASSADORS FOR SCHOOL SAFETY

Members educate communities about a misunderstood hazard

AS SCHOOL SHOOTINGS proliferated tragically in recent years, many schools made a seemingly sensible but dangerous decision: They put barrier systems on school doors that are meant to keep offenders out. Too often, though, such systems violate safety codes and risk trapping students and teachers inside.

To address that concerning trend, in 2016 the Door and Hardware Institute launched an awareness program called “Lock Don’t Block” to alert school leaders about the dangers of barricade systems. But DHI also wanted to generate more direct connections between safety experts and schools. So in 2019, the association’s sister foundation, the Door and Security Safety Foundation, launched the DSSF Ambassador program, offering training to DHI’s approximately 5,000 members on how to take the Lock Don’t Block message to their communities.

“We were hearing that whether or not schools knew there was a code issue, [barriers] were just showing up on classroom doors,” says Sharon Newport, CAE, who was DHI and DSSF interim CEO at the time.

“So we had to en masse start to educate people. And the only way to do that is to empower members to take action.”

DHI members who sign up for the program are trained in how to identify the security systems used in schools, explain the dangers of barrier systems to school administrators, and share tips on communicating with school districts about making changes. The effort also builds a mass of grassroots support around DHI’s advocacy efforts to push for legislation to change building codes that allow the barricade systems.

To that end, ambassadors are encouraged to participate in a host

of ways. “We saw changes happening in the schools, and then we started to see it in the legislation,” Newport says. “So both DHI and the foundation use the ambassadorship to encourage members to tell us what’s happening on the ground and to educate people—testify, contact legislators, write an op-ed.”

Since launching the program, DSSF has also developed partnerships with safety organizations like Safe and Sound Schools and the National Association of State Fire Marshals to spread the message. Looking forward, DHI and DSSF CEO A. Cedric Calhoun, FASAE, CAE,

says the foundation will do more to work directly with chapters to encourage more members to continue the work and serve as a fact-based resource on an issue that’s often consumed by heated argument.

“Although they are sensitive to any incident, our members can focus on the facts and remove emotion from the conversation,” Calhoun says. “Everyone is going to be emotionally charged after an incident, but having a group of professionals who can be factual about it is going to be key. I want us to be more of a sought-after resource when things happen—and frankly, even before things happen.”—**M.A.**





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BOARD SMARTS

Buddy Up

Mentoring can help new board members feel included

By Lisa Boylan Boards are often clubby, old-school environments that sometimes segregate into cliques, apart from other volunteers and rank-and-file members. This can create challenges even within a board, when new board members feel left out and wonder how they can better integrate. ¶ Melissa Sorenson, executive director of the Professional Background Screening Association (PBSA), noticed the trend among her own board members. So, she and her team came up with ways to diffuse the awkwardness and encourage more engagement and familiarity. ¶ New members just learning the ropes may find approaching their new colleagues

intimidating, especially when boards move as a pack at association events. When PBSA had in-person conferences, Sorenson's team encouraged board members to sit toward the front of the room during sessions and to bring friends with them—not other board members—to make sure board members were seen interacting with attendees and to break up any impression that the board was an inaccessible club.

They also assign board members as liaisons to some of PBSA's active committees to improve communication throughout the association and give board members some content ownership for board meetings. PBSA has councils that operate under board leadership, and committees and advisory groups that fall into each of its geographic councils. By serving as a liaison to these committees, a board member becomes "a real face and voice to the group's active volunteers," Sorenson says. The liaison system also gives volunteers a direct path to a board member based on their area of interest.

More recently, Sorenson and her team have identified tenured board members and paired them up with new members to provide a kind of peer orientation into board service. The pairs connect before the new member's first couple of board meetings. The buddy system, more formally titled the PBSA New Board Member Mentoring Program, has succeeded in bringing new members up to speed on board meeting content and flow and in ensuring they have a board peer to bond with, Sorenson says.

New board members can sometimes feel like the new person in the room and less confident about speaking up in meetings. Having someone to connect with before board meetings—to review the agenda and ask questions in advance—helps new members feel more prepared and comfortable with the content before they get on a call with 14 board members, Sorenson says.

The mentoring program has paid off, this year in particular. "Some of our newer board members were engaging more quickly out of the gate," Sorenson says. "For several years we saw patterns of only two to four people active in conversations. Now I've seen a lot more of our new folks weighing in on the conversation."

"Some of our newer board members were engaging more quickly out of the gate."

— Melissa Sorenson

**CEO
to
CEO**

The past year shifted tech-savvy approaches into overdrive. What digital strategy worked best for you?



Barton C. James

PRESIDENT AND CEO
AIR CONDITIONING CONTRACTORS OF AMERICA
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

The disruptions and forced financial adjustments of 2020 gave us the confidence to become more of a data-driven association. We focused on finding new ways to connect with our member companies and expand those member relationships. Through this shift, not only did we survive, we thrived—finding a new business model fueled by technology and data that allowed us to capture a greater market share. We now have the highest membership numbers and retention rate we have ever seen.



Carey Goryl, CAE

CEO
ASSOCIATION FOR ADVANCING PHYSICIAN
AND PROVIDER RECRUITMENT
OKEMOS, MICHIGAN

A year without live connection created an even bigger need to retain members. Initially designed as a member growth campaign, our #IamAAPPR digital effort became a retention strategy. It focused on members and relied on messaging directly from them. We told the unique stories of members through blogs, podcasts, and Facebook, and they were widely followed. We increased member retention by 5 percent.



Michael Stark, CAE

CEO
ASSOCIATION OF THE WALL AND
CEILING INDUSTRY
FALLS CHURCH, VIRGINIA

AWCI initiated the development of a new association management system last year. This investment will impact all aspects of the association, from membership to education to advertising. AWCI sunset its longtime print and electronic newsletters and added two more modern and timely e-newsletters. Like many other groups in 2020, we cancelled our in-person fall conference and turned it into a three-day virtual event. We did not see a drop in attendance or revenue compared to our typical in-person event.



Lakisha A. Woods, CAE

PRESIDENT AND CEO
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF BUILDING SCIENCES
WASHINGTON, DC

NIBS was created to be a convener for the industry. In 2020, just as many organizations, we moved our in-person annual meeting virtual. However, we also used this opportunity to develop new content, convene more industry experts, and create a virtual education series based on newly identified needs. Engaging with members and nonmembers to increase awareness about our organization and the services we offer enhanced our value proposition and built the brand.

CULTURE SHIFT

Angel B. Pérez says change is more effective when everyone designs it together

■ CEO
■ NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
COLLEGE ADMISSION COUNSELING
■ ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

People will support what they help build.

As the new CEO of an organization that had the same leader for 30 years, I knew inspiring staff to move in a new direction would be challenging, but it was possible because we did it collaboratively. Creating a new culture requires buy-in from all stakeholders. When I arrived, my team and I designed new mission and values statements. We asked ourselves, "What do we value? How will we work together? What does the new culture look like in action?" Our team, excited about moving forward, hosted brown bags and group discussions about the change and created an award for staff members who exemplify our values.

Be positive, not punitive.

Culture change is difficult because it requires people to move away from their comfort zones. At NACAC, we call out the old culture when we see it but do it in a way that isn't punitive. Our team often uses the phrase "I'm moving the saltshaker," a term coined by restaurateur Danny Meyer. It means we're observing behavior that isn't part of our cultural norms and expectations.

Space matters.

When our office reopens this summer, the space will undergo significant transformation. Our mission and values statements will live on the walls, photos of our members will be displayed throughout the building, and we'll make changes that represent our values, like removing printers and file cabinets as we live up to our culture of sustainability. Culture is manifested in various ways, including physical surroundings.

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Money & Business



NEW MONEY

Sparking Revenue

How a webinar series spawned leads and fueled income

By Rasheeda Childress When your association deals with energy, it may feel like kismet to find a spark for revenue that touches several parts of the association. That's exactly what happened with the Energy Management Association when it decided to host a seven-session series of webinars in the fall of 2020. ¶ "We wanted as high attendance as possible, so we made them free and offered free continuing education credits," says Sam Schwarz, EMA's member engagement and marketing manager. ¶ The organization's webinars also qualified for CEU credits for two allied associations, making them more attractive to sponsors because they drew a

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wide variety of attendees. But EMA kept sponsor pricing relatively low and cast a wider net to bring in revenue from several parts of the organization.

For example, the webinars helped identify people who might be interested in the organization's certification. "We added the checkbox that said, 'Are you interested in our nationally recognized certification for energy management?'" Schwarz says.

"Through that, we were able to get over 1,100 qualified leads."

In addition, EMA used the series to stoke interest in a new associate membership category, which is aimed at suppliers. "Every time someone sponsored a webinar, we threw

in an associate membership,"

Schwarz says. "We would promote the webinar saying, 'This associate member is cohosting this webinar with us.' Then we would get people reach out to us and say, 'What is this associate membership about? I want to learn more about that.'"

Because the webinars were recorded, EMA is now monetizing the series by making it available to people who missed it. "We're turning it into an on-demand version, where we are going to have it on our website for purchase going forward," Schwarz says.

The webinars were a hit with members, who enjoyed the one-hour time frame and weekly connection with peers in the energy management field. They also allowed some members who have earned EMA's certification to get more involved.

"One of the things we tried to do with our webinars was to have one of our energy management professionals—that's the name of our certification—be a cohost," Schwarz says. "Previously, maybe these members weren't as engaged or had the opportunity to be. But these programs gave them the opportunity. Not only that, their companies loved the exposure. A happy member, an engaged member, is more likely to renew and keep their certification."

"A happy member, an engaged member, is more likely to renew and keep their certification."

—Sam Schwartz



Advocacy for Busy Activists

Online tool helps members make a quick policy impact

WHAT'S THE GREAT IDEA? Two-Minute Activist tool
WHO'S DOING IT? American Association of University Women

WHAT'S INVOLVED? The Two-Minute Activist is an online tool that allows people who sign up—both members and nonmembers—to get alerts when an AAUW priority issue arises in Congress or a state legislature. After being alerted, the recipient gets information on the issue and is taken to a web page with a letter they can send to lawmakers. ¶ "They see a letter that we have drafted on that specific issue, they are able to customize it, and then send it off to the elected official that we targeted," says Robin Lucas, AAUW's grassroots advocacy manager. "All the difficulty of knowing who your elected official is, how to get the email to them, and what are the important points to hit is already done." ¶ When advocates sign up for the program, they supply their name and address, and software routes correspondence to the correct officials. Advocacy alerts are sent via email. AAUW briefly tested text-messaging recently, but that format was unpopular. ¶ Two-Minute Activist was especially helpful during the pandemic. "Having the ability to be agile in our engagement is really important to making a difference for both our advocates and organization," Lucas says. "Especially in the environment this past year, which required a lot of virtual engagement."

WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING? Activists are responsive and appreciate how easy the system is to use. Over a four-month period, a recent alert convinced 5,700 activists to send more than 12,000 letters to their House members and senators. "For the advocates, there is a lot less stress on what to do and how to do it, and instead, there's this satisfying feeling of, 'OK, I did this,'" Lucas says. —R.C.

DATA POINT

THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE OF REMOTE WORK

Many professionals spent 2020 and the beginning of 2021 working from home due to the pandemic. While many prognosticators have suggested that remote work will continue extensively post-pandemic, the future isn't clear, according to research by the executive consulting firm Pearl Meyer. In a survey conducted in February and March this year, respondents said they expected about a third of the U.S. workforce will be permanently remote, but their answers got murkier when they were asked about their organizations' actual plans. Most who moved to telework during the pandemic were still figuring out how to handle remote work moving forward.

How long will you maintain your current remote workforce approach?

37%

Undecided

Decisions about remote work's future and timetables for a decision haven't been established

27%

Revisiting after fall 2021

Plans for remote work will be revisited after fall 2021

14%

Other

Other

13%

Return to in-person

Expect to return to pre-pandemic levels of in-person work

5%

Permanent remote

Permanent change to remote work

SOURCE: Pearl Meyer, Work From Home Policies and Practices Survey, Spring 2021



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SALT LAKE

Let Content Be the Bridge That Builds Your Hybrid Events

Hybrid events—parallel events that differ in scope, style, and interactivity—present a tough road for associations. Well-designed content could make the road a little less rocky. By Melissa Bouma



Melissa Bouma, president of Manifest, has more than 15 years of experience building insight-driven branding and content strategy, with a client base representing large companies, major universities and prominent associations.

WITH THE SHIFTS IN OUR CULTURE that have taken place since the pandemic began, many associations have simply been trying to keep their heads above water in hopes that in-person events—and the comfortable business model they support—make their return.

The struggle is real, as they say. Even as people begin to emerge from their home offices and conduct business in person, the reality is that there's going to be a lengthy "mushy period" in which events will live in both the digital and physical worlds. This may pose challenges for a number of reasons—not least of which is needing to plan two events that are related but have to be organized separately, with different target audiences and different distribution methods.

This, in turn, will lead to other hurdles. For example, what if your event has in-person attendees but virtual speakers? Or live speakers for virtual attendees? Recording all of these sessions could get expensive fast. Given that events make up as much as 40 percent of an organization's revenue, according to a Personify study, juggling all of these considerations can be complicated. Equally important is that attendees continue to derive real value from events, regardless of whether they're in person or virtual. So how do you make sure that all attendees, virtual and live, come away with, if not the same, then a similar experience? Ultimately, the goal is to make all the elements of an event available to everyone, regardless of location—and content can be a great way to do this.

Here are a few ideas for using content to conquer all your obstacles:

FIND NEW WAYS TO LEVERAGE THE CONTENT LATER.

People are wary of traveling right now, and many will not be in a position to go anywhere anytime soon. And as we know, while people may register for an event at a set time, they may not get to it until later. This makes it all the more important to create content recaps of key event takeaways, in either digital or print form, so virtual attendees can still engage with the event in some way. Plus, content recaps can become an opportunity to repack-age and re-form information differently down the line—a concept called content atomization. Reusing content in this manner not only builds member engagement but can also help your organization find ways to experiment, single out successful strategies, and scale up what works.

BUILD A DIGITAL MICROSITE. Sure, you can have a digital event, but simply trying to re-create an in-person conference in a virtual format may not be enough to keep the attention of a digital audience. Building an experience that's tailored to what a digital audience needs—whether that's in a live setting or after the fact—could have a strong effect on people participating at home. (Especially if it's personalized.) There's a good chance that people may still be working while trying to attend a virtual event, meaning that they'll be distracted. By leading with strong content and a creative design—think Apple's use of virtual "Memoji" heads during its Worldwide Developers Conference this year—you might be able to change the conversation. (It might also prove attractive to sponsors, too.)

LEAN ON A "FLIPPED LEARNING" MODEL. Getting people to return to an in-person venue will take time, but you can use your hybrid events to start to encourage them. One type of nudge: What if you built your event around a flipped model, where the learning was done online, but the post-learning discussion happened in person? That way, before people even stepped into a room, you'd know that everyone was on the same page—and the in-person interactions would gain new power. Such an approach could encourage people to get back to the expo hall, as they are reminded of the real synergy and value of "live" interactions. It would also maximize the best aspects of each setting: focused learning at home, social interaction in person.

In summary, high-quality content can provide a bridge between audiences that might not be in the same room. And when trying to prove that your organization is vital to its members, that bridge may be just what's needed to ensure that everyone ends up on the same side.

To learn more about Manifest, go to manifest.com.

LINK INVESTMENTS WITH STRATEGY

While you may not often consider how your association's investments impact the organization's strategic outlook, experts say the two are linked. Three investment advisors from ASAE Investments LLC explain how.

Offense and Defense

A healthy investment reserve helps associations plan for both the "offense" and "defense" parts of their strategic plan. On offense, associations use reserves to fund investments in new programs, improve infrastructure, and even make strategic acquisitions. On "defense," reserves can be an essential resource when that long-term strategic outlook inevitably hits a speed bump. During the COVID-19 economic downturn, reserves proved to be a much-needed safety net to supplement operating revenue shortfalls.

Ahmed Farruk, regional director and senior consultant, Fiducient Advisors

Fiduciary Responsibilities

Aligning an association's strategic outlook with its investment portfolio is essential to fulfilling its fiduciary responsibilities. The COVID pandemic sharply illustrated the reliance associations have on the safety and liquidity of their investment portfolios. Many associations were met with COVID-related challenges as revenue sources were severely diminished or completely eliminated. Cash reserves coupled with high-quality, liquid securities were able to augment operating cash flow.

Susan Traver, senior advisor of new business development, Brown Advisory



"Aligning an association's strategic outlook with its investment portfolio is essential to fulfilling its fiduciary responsibilities."

— Susan Traver

Financial Forecasting

For many organizations, the alignment of investment assets with a multi-year strategic plan is a critical element of financial forecasting. Targeted investment balances are integrated into the strategy as a potential source of consistent income and an operating budget safety net. The latter can be valuable when the organization is faced with challenges because of economic forces impacting its membership, or because of external events that impede its ability to execute on its programmatic initiatives.

Allan House, institutional consultant and vice president of wealth management, Graystone Consulting

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Technology



TECH MEMO

Members Get It Done

Volunteer tech know-how streamlines a complex project

By Lisa Boylan Keeping member data updated is hard enough, but taking on a project with complicated software is an even heavier lift. For the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, tapping into volunteers' expertise proved to be an excellent solution. ¶ SIOP has a staff of 11 serving 9,000 members. With her team spread thin, Jayne Tegge, SIOP's member engagement manager, was delighted when the organization's membership analytics subcommittee took on the task of creating a member dashboard using Tableau, a sophisticated data visualization platform. ¶ "Because data collection and analysis and making evidence-based decisions

are a crucial part of what our members actually do for their jobs, they took the ball and ran with it,” Tegge says.

The new dashboard is useful for analyzing data and creating insights, giving Tegge a better idea of who is engaged, who is paying their dues, what the retention rate is, and what the different drivers of that retention are. It also provides segmentation information among members, retirees, associates, fellows, and more.

An unexpected added benefit? It is also useful to help SIOP’s members to know more about each other.

“Understanding more about membership, demographics, and trends really does serve as a proxy for the study of industrial and organizational psychology as a profession and what’s happening in our field,” says

Amy DuVernet, the subcommittee’s cochair.

Tegge says SIOP takes seriously its responsibility to safeguard member data, including its demographic and identity-related information. “We are committed to welcoming more representative voices in all aspects of our association’s community, but to do so we must have a clear picture of who our members are and how we can best

service their needs,” she says.

When the subcommittee began tackling the dashboard project, it requested member data from SIOP’s AMS. To allay privacy concerns, a staff analyst devised a system using identifying numbers for members to provide the subcommittee with aggregated data that did not include any member personal information.

What if you don’t have access to a group of volunteers with data expertise who are ready to take on such a big task?

“My recommendations for any association that contracts out for such an initiative would be to make sure there were some really knowledgeable and trusted members involved in the project,” DuVernet says. “Someone who could help inform decisions and provide information about how members would use the dashboard and review the output from that external provider before it was shared broadly, given the sensitivity of the data.”

“We are committed to welcoming more representative voices in all aspects of our association’s community.”

— Jayne Tegge

TALKING TECH

Clean Data Is Better Data

Data hygiene isn’t always top of the to-do list, for the same reason cleaning house isn’t. But it is essential and doesn’t have to be overwhelming. **BRITTANY CARTER**, president of Association TRENDS, explains why.



Why is data hygiene so important?

Data is fundamentally the basis for how associations do much of their work. Members are often willing to share their information, so there’s quite a bit of valuable data. But your data analytics are only as good as your data. Hygiene is the least sexy thing about data, but it’s arguably the most important. In the short term, you’ll realize immediate benefits—like better success rates on membership and marketing campaigns—because you’re dealing with clean data.

What are the consequences of dirty data?

There are a lot of hidden costs of dirty data. Giving advertisers and sponsors the wrong data on their campaigns can have a direct financial impact. Association members also want to feel part of a community, so if you’re spelling their name wrong, it doesn’t feel comfortable

anymore. They want you to know who they are. If you are reporting to your board with bad data, that can cause you to tell the wrong story. Just like you need to clean your house every once in a while, you should clean your data, too.

Where is a good place to start?

Look at your data. That may sound simple, but too often data might be owned by the IT department or locked in an AMS. But so much can be perceived immediately after exporting it to an Excel file and looking at the record. You can see gaps, formatting issues, or a valuable field. There is no magic wand. And just because you can take advantage of technology doesn’t mean you shouldn’t be directly involved. It’s not a best practice to set it and forget it. Whether you’re using an external provider, or you have somebody in-house that’s savvy, you still have to keep watching it.

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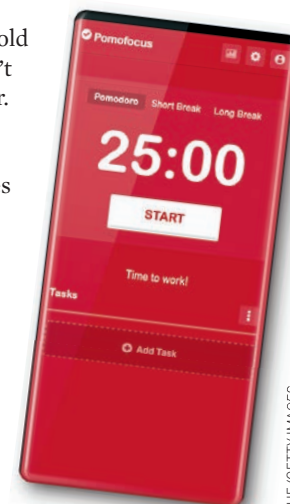
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Membership



MEMBERSHIP MEMO

Holding On Through Hardship

Members help members stay in the association fold

By Lisa Boylan The American Library Association's ReMember Fund enables library workers who are currently unemployed to retain membership and stay connected to ALA's vital resources and peer network. ¶ It's also a strategy for long-term member retention and engagement. ¶ "We want to create a career-long relationship with our members—and support them during the highs and the lows," says Melissa Walling, CAE, ALA's director of member relations and services. ¶ Through the ReMember Fund, unemployed library workers can apply to receive a one-time

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sponsorship to cover basic ALA membership for one year. The idea was sparked from a thread in ALA's online member community, which prompted the membership team and ALA's membership committee to create the confidential fund.

Walling's team looked at membership trends over the past year to guide the program requirements. They noted that student members had been increasing despite the pandemic, so they kept the program geared for library worker professional members only. "We wanted to focus our efforts on the areas of greatest need," she says.

To streamline the process, ALA opted for a first-come-first-served process based on eligibility. In April, during National Library Week, the group started a campaign to raise money for the fund, which supplements seed money from ALA. The fund initially sponsored 100 regular memberships.

The program launched in May, and since then donations have exceeded applications for assistance. The group amped up communication about the fund and integrated information about it more consistently into its renewal communications, Walling says.

Members who hold current regular, international, library support staff, or nonsalaried membership types are eligible for sponsorships. The fund is also a membership retention strategy, which is why it is limited to current or recently lapsed members, Walling says. The program extends to those whose memberships have lapsed within the last three years.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, ALA has offered several flexible options to all members, including extended grace periods, installment billing, and nonsalaried membership rates. "We felt like we needed to do more—especially as we were hearing from current members that they wanted to help others," Walling says. But the ReMember Fund is not pandemic-specific. "We want it to evolve with the needs of the community," she says.

The fund is especially meaningful because librarians are not in the profession for the money. They do the work because they love the work and they believe in service, Walling says.

"Those are two strong pillars of the profession," she says. "The ReMember Fund reflects how members show up as engaged members of the community."

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

ENGAGEMENT WITHIN REACH

How to make member engagement easy, fast, and effective

Instead of overwhelming new members with a long list of benefits in a traditional printed brochure, the International Society of Arboriculture uses email to give them a handful of easy first steps to get involved.

ISA restructured its new-member communications and went from a printed brochure and membership card to an emailed piece. The message offers opportunities for new members to begin to engage with ISA in bite-size ways through its website, online community, social media, publications, certifications, and products.

"A lot of folks didn't realize we had a Facebook page, and they've been members for 20 years," says Tip Tucker Kendall, ISA's director of member services.

Here are three ways to make engagement accessible:

1 KEEP IT SIMPLE. Instead of making the communication a sales pitch with a list of 40 benefits, the goal is to get members to focus on what they can do in five minutes to get deeper into their profession and become more invested in the community, Tucker Kendall says.

2 PAVE A TWO-WAY STREET. By outlining a few ways to show up and get a return on membership, ISA sets up a dynamic where both the association and the member have a role to play. "It is an opportunity to engage in a relationship with the association," she says. "And part of that onus is on the member."

3 DELIVER THE RIGHT MESSAGE. New members are usually one of the most at-risk groups for not renewing, Tucker Kendall says. So, it's been more effective to push the bite-size engagement pieces upfront rather than taking a sales approach. Membership "is not a service or product that you're buying," she says. "It's important to give members information they can manage in their day-to-day lives."

The strategy has paid off. "Overall, new member engagement is up," Tucker Kendall says. —L.B.

DATA POINT

MEMBERSHIP SCAN

Despite more than a year of unusual challenge, associations have remained resilient and are generally optimistic about the future. A survey conducted by Advanced Solutions International in December 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, pointed to some key objectives. A top operational goal for association executives? Getting their members more engaged.



Positive signs:

- **Membership engagement** increased for **49%** of respondents.
- **Member retention** was up or held steady for **57%** of respondents.
- **Overall membership** increased or stayed the same for **58%** of respondents.



The flip side:

- **Net revenue** declined for **53%** of respondents.
- **Member retention** decreased for **32%** of respondents.

SOURCE: Advanced Solutions International, 2021 Membership Performance Survey

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Meetings



MEETINGS MEMO

Better Booth Business

Help exhibitors close the deal at virtual tradeshows

By Samantha Whitehorne All associations want exhibitors to have a good experience and generate leads at their virtual events. So what can organizers do to help? After reviewing 461 virtual conferences, virtual and hybrid events platform Swapcard offered 10 data-backed recommendations in [“The Business of Virtual Events: How to Close Business Deals at a Virtual Event, According to Data.”](#) Here’s a look at five of them.

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Meetings

→ **Encourage interactions before the event.** Swapcard data reveals that in the days leading up to a virtual tradeshow, up to 28 percent of the time attendees spend exploring the platform is devoted to browsing exhibitors. That means exhibitors can capitalize on attendee interest before the show opens. Because of this, organizers should open the platform ahead of time and implement an effective communication strategy that urges exhibitors and attendees to use the platform in advance of an event.

→ **Extend the event lifecycle.** Inbound messages and requests from attendees to exhibitors peak after a tradeshow, meaning crucial business opportunities fall into their laps once the event is over. Organizers should consider creating year-round communities where networking opportunities remain available outside the confines of the live event.

→ **Offer sponsored session opportunities to exhibitors.** During a one-day virtual conference, more than 40 percent of exhibitor leads came from attendees who watched a sponsored session; for a two-day conference, it was 50 percent, according to the report. Associations should review their sponsorship packages and offer exhibitors the option to sponsor sessions. "Speaking at a sponsored session will position exhibitors as experts on a particular topic, making them more credible to attendees," the report states.

→ **Emphasize the power of virtual booths.** The research shows that, of all business closed during virtual tradeshows, 30 to 45 percent happens at the virtual booth. Exhibitors should make their virtual booths immersive and interactive, while organizers should provide tips on creating virtual booths that are appealing and customized.

→ **Promote subtle networking.** Although there are many different sales styles, exhibitor messages in virtual platforms that are too pushy or "sales-y" don't work. For example, according to the report, 64.8 percent of meeting requests that were accompanied by generic sales messages were not accepted. Organizers should stress to exhibitors the importance of subtle outreach and make them aware of the features on the event platform that will help them connect with attendees in this way.

SMART BUSINESS

CAREER SUPPORT

College Television Summit helps students offset "pandemic learning losses"

THE PROBLEM. Recognizing that media arts students in colleges across the country were unable to get traditional career support and internship and training opportunities due to COVID-19, the Television Academy Foundation wanted to help them make up for these "pandemic learning losses."

THE TACTICS. TAF launched the College Television Summit. "The foundation remains committed to providing free educational online programs for students from all backgrounds to support and encourage their career aspirations in media during these unprecedented times," says TAF Chair Cris Abrego. The free, three-day May virtual event featured 10 online forums with top Hollywood producers, executives, and talent and career advisors, giving students enrolled in media programs at two- and four-year colleges an insider's guide to television careers. Panel discussions included content creators from *Ted Lasso* and *The Boys*, while executives from Ava DuVernay's ARRAY Filmworks discussed the business of television. In addition, the first 90 registrants participated in a bonus exclusive: virtual networking meetings with prominent television professionals, many of whom are foundation alumni.

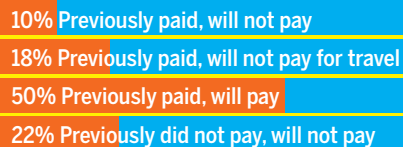
THE RESULTS. After registration opened, the event sold out in a matter of days. "It was a tremendous success and obvious that we met a need," says Abrego. "Knowing this, we're looking for additional opportunities to develop similar offerings in the months ahead."—S.W.

DATA POINT

LEAN TIMES FOR CONFERENCE REIMBURSEMENT

More than one quarter of respondents to "The Conference Roadmap to Recovery" survey said their employer has eliminated or reduced reimbursement for conference participation this year. That means that offering a virtual or hybrid path for participants and sponsors may be necessary for associations that don't want to risk another year of revenue losses and reduced engagement with their community.

2021 Employer Reimbursement



SOURCE: Bruce Rosenthal Associates LLC, HPN Global, and Ricochet Advisory Services, *The Conference Roadmap to Recovery*

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CHIEF CHANGE MAKERS

Organizations have been working to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion for decades, often in a cycle of progress followed by retraction. After an increased focus on racial justice in 2020, many associations are hoping to seed long-lasting change through a new C-suite position: chief diversity officer. **BY Rasheeda Childress**

THE MURDER OF GEORGE FLOYD LAST YEAR

fueled a wave of protests and a renewed sense of urgency around tackling the racial problems that have plagued the U.S. since 1619. As the country grappled with the continuing legacy of racism, many saw 2020's activism as a spark to make significant change.

In both the corporate and association worlds, many organizations are elevating their diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives by hiring new C-suite executives focused on the work. Whether their title is chief diversity officer or some other combination of "chief" and DEI, these leaders are seeking to create an environment where people—regardless of race, gender, sexuality, or ability—can be valued, heard, and accepted.

Three new DEI chiefs spoke to *Associations Now* about the current landscape of DEI work, the challenges they're facing, and their goals. One noted that because DEI work has been going on for decades, it sometimes feels cyclical. These new executives hope to break that cycle and usher in a new era of progress.





YOLANDA CHASE

**Chief Diversity Officer
Washington Technology
Industry Association**

For Yolanda Chase, who was appointed chief diversity officer for the Washington Technology Industry Association in December 2020, her DEI work goes beyond doing a job.

“It’s not only my passion, but it’s like being obedient to the calling of your life,” Chase says. “You know that that’s what you should be doing.”

With increased interest in DEI work in both the public and private sectors, she believes now is a pivotal moment to make change, especially since her association touches so many technology companies. “I have an opportunity to not only impact one organization, but many,” Chase says. “We like to say that we are trying to do things that are shaping the future of tech when it comes to workplace equity.”

While now is a great time to be doing DEI work, it is not without difficulties. “The challenges are around being able to shift that mindset,” Chase says. “Yes, we do need to get diverse talent in the door. We need to hire more Black and brown people. We also want to make sure that they are properly assimilated into the organization, and they are integrated in a way that takes into consideration the intersectional aspects of that.”

If the renewed energy does anything for the field, Chase hopes it will help solve her greatest challenge. “We need more innovation and less resistance,” she says. “That’s my dream.”

Getting less resistance, however, requires people in organizations to do some personal work. “We have

WHAT DOES
SUCCESS
LOOK LIKE?

“Success looks like the equity piece. Success looks like balance in representation. It looks like equitable pay. It looks like equitable benefits at all levels of the organization. It looks like we stop with the whole ‘We can’t find the talent’ excuse. It looks like willfully seeking out and eradicating systems that disproportionately impact Black and brown people. Seeking them out and dismantling them and being fearless about the fact that they exist. Being able to bring that to the forefront, address it, and resolve for it—that is success, right?”

—Yolanda Chase, Chief
Diversity Officer,
Washington Technology
Industry Association

significant work to do on self, and this is the part that we often don’t want to address in companies,” Chase says. “But we have to be reminded that many people are doing the work from their level of consciousness.”

If that work on self is done and people approach DEI work intentionally, real change can be achieved. “We can tell a great story about dismantling the systems,” Chase says. “Or we can tell a great story about not creating them, and being very mindful about what are we creating at our organization that might be inadvertently discriminating against marginalized folks.”

When doing DEI work, she says, organizations can’t be timid. “I personally believe in taking some calculated risks when designing that DEI business model and when influencing and adopting that innovation,” Chase says. “I think you’re going to have to be open to taking some calculated risks. Maybe you do things like pilots or betas.”

While many people have been doing DEI work for decades and the nation still lacks equity, Chase says it is important to acknowledge successes, even if they are small.

“We have to congratulate ourselves and recognize when we are making incre-

mental changes,” she says. “We are seeing more attention being paid by companies. Even if they don’t exactly know how to approach it, they are broaching the topic, saying, ‘We know we need to do something, and we need help in doing it.’”

EDNA KANE-WILLIAMS

**Executive Vice President
and Chief Diversity Officer
AARP**

Edna Kane-Williams says that although DEI work has been going on for decades, the movement feels different now.

“Sometimes the work can feel cyclical,” says Kane-Williams, who earlier this year was named executive vice president and chief diversity officer, a newly created position, at AARP. “I feel that we may be at an inflection point that signals serious change. The desire to create change is manifesting itself in a different way and a different level of intensity, so I am hopeful. There does seem to be different energy. One that says, it’s time to get this right.”

She has some context for that feeling. Kane-Williams has been involved in DEI work her entire career, at both associations and for-profit organizations. She was a member of ASAE’s 2002-2003 Diversity Executive Leadership Program, an experience that helped shape her thoughts on diversity and expand her network.

While she sees a new energy now, she doesn’t think change will be quick. “What I’ve learned in this work is that it’s definitely a marathon and not a sprint,” she says.

For DEI work to have impact, a few things need to happen. For one, it’s important that DEI has made its way to the C-suite and that this new leadership position reports to an organization’s chief executive. “That signals tremendous weight of the position,” Kane-Williams says. “It levels the playing field, so I’m not always in the position of appealing to people who are more senior than I am. It makes us all colleagues. It makes my voice equal in the room, equal to our advocacy work, to our program work.”

Another factor is funding. “This isn’t necessarily cheap work,” she says. “It doesn’t have to be extravagant, but



**WHAT DOES
SUCCESS
LOOK LIKE?**

there has to be a commitment to do this work and do it right,” including supporting it with a sufficient budget.

Kane-Williams also stresses the importance of metrics to ensure DEI programs are making an impact. “This is real work that has to have real measurement, real goals and objectives,” she says. “You have to be able to explain to the organization and your

“One key measure of success, including at AARP, is the supplier diversity program. How much do you invest in diversity-owned organizations, including women, multicultural, LGBTQ? Mark where you started. Where do you want to be in five years? What is a stretch goal? What is an attainable goal? What is the aspirational goal? And then you do check-ins to see if you reached that. If you don’t meet a goal, that’s not the end of the world. It’s important to unpack why, retool, figure out how you can do this differently, and launch the effort again.”

**—Edna Kane-Williams, Executive
Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer, AARP**

constituents how you are making a difference and how you will measure success. Sometimes, that means impacting performance reviews and salary reviews, because you have to put teeth in this work in order to ensure that it gets done correctly.”

Focus will help an organization pick the right measurements. “To increase your impactfulness, be really strategic about what you’re focusing on and go all in on a few items, as opposed to skin deep on many,” Kane-Williams says.

Finally, organizations need to make sure that staff understand that DEI work is organization-wide. At AARP, Kane-Williams is working on three areas—workforce, workplace, and marketplace—that require help from all teams.

“When you have one person or one office identified with this work, some people can translate that to: ‘This is your job,’” Kane-Williams says. “Diversity, equity, and inclusion is work that should touch everybody and should be an issue for everybody. Our strategies and what we are trying to do is going to literally touch every department in the organization.”

WILLIAM A. MCDADE, M.D., PH.D.

**Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer
Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education**

Throughout his career, Dr. William McDade has played a role in expanding diversity. As a young physician, he joined a committee tasked with improving admission rates of minorities at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine.

Through committees and administrative roles, McDade has stayed active in DEI work. In 2019, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education named McDade its first chief diversity and inclusion officer. Tasked with accrediting graduate medical education (GME) programs, ACGME has prioritized increasing

diversity in the medical profession. While McDade took on the role before George Floyd was murdered, he hopes the momentum of the last year continues.

“Our hope is that the motivation is enough to get people to start being less defensive about terms like ‘structural racism’ or ‘antiracism,’ or things that we have been unlikely to suggest or talk about in the open,” McDade says.

One way that organizations can push through defensiveness is by putting requirements and measures in place for DEI work, which ACGME did for accreditation. “Because programs want to maintain their accreditation, they want to be

in compliance with that particular requirement,” McDade says.

Because DEI work involves bringing diverse people together, sometimes objectives get lost in translation. In medical education, rather than creating a pipeline for new students, programs have been fighting over the

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

“If we can figure out how to measure what matters when it comes to delivering the best possible care to patients, that will be success. The medical college admissions test predicts how well you will do in the first year of medical school, but it doesn’t predict how well you’re going to do clinically as a practicing physician. The emphasis should be on measuring the quality of what we are doing to get better outcomes for our patients, which is the ultimate goal of the ACGME, to improve the care of our patients.”

—William A. McDade, M.D., Ph.D., Chief Diversity
and Inclusion Officer, Accreditation
Council for Graduate Medical Education



few minority candidates currently available. “That is not what we intend at all,” McDade says.

To combat this, he launched an education campaign targeting GME programs. “We hope programs will work cooperatively with one another to try to increase the number of people on the pathway into medical school,” McDade says. “There is no reason a medical school should have a high school program and GME doesn’t. We want them to increase the size of the pie, not fight against another residency for the small slice that exists.”

ACGME is hoping to facilitate buy-in for DEI initiatives and encourage development of innovative solutions through peer learning. “The idea is to build learning communities that can come together and do some reverse ideation,” McDade says. “We want them to think about the barriers that GME sets before a learner, try to remove those barriers, and enable increased success of learners who enter GME and then complete it.”

Among these learning communities, ACGME is targeting those tasked with DEI at GME programs. Those professionals often face challenges if their organizations don’t provide them enough support. “The group is focused on helping DEI officers understand the sorts of challenges that exist and share information and experiences,” McDade says.

For ACGME, the ultimate goal is to have a medical field that reflects the diversity of the community, allowing patients access to care they need.

“If you don’t have doctors in your community, then you may not seek care outside of your community, and that will leave you with disparate care,” McDade says. “Our hope is to make sure that everybody who wants to have a physician in their community gets a physician in their community.”

RASHEEDA CHILDRESS is a senior editor at *Associations Now*. Email: rchildress@asaecenter.org



THE BOARD’S DEI ROLE

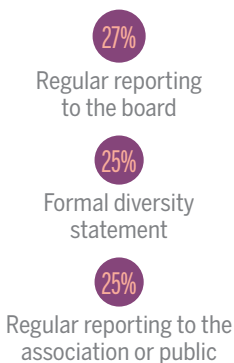
Chief diversity officers aren’t the only ones that have an impact on an organization’s ability to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion. Board members matter, too.

“One common denominator for all of this is the C-suite and board skills development in diversity, equity, and inclusion,” says Yolanda Chase, chief diversity officer for the Washington Technology Industry Association. “We need to help them to prioritize DEI at the level of strategic priority.”

Chase adds that if boards are not trained properly, they often are not responsive when DEI advocates within the organization seek to make changes. “It’s not about putting [advocates] in front of the board and letting them make their business case,” Chase says. “It’s about preparing the board for acceptance of that competency.”

New research from the ASAE Research Foundation looks at ways association boards approach DEI issues, both as they relate to the board itself and the organization as a whole. In a survey, board members rated the following organizational strategies and practices as most successful in advancing DEI:

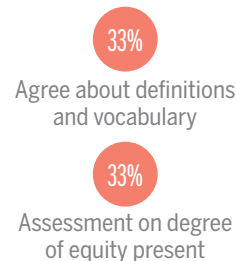
OVERALL DEI



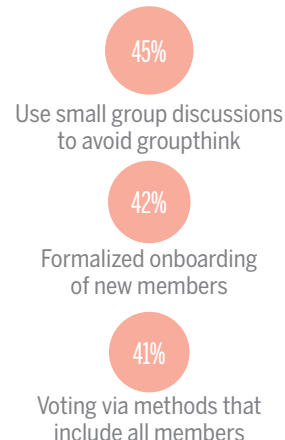
DIVERSITY



EQUITY




INCLUSION



What “D





Digital First' Means Today

It's more than just hosting an online conference and supporting remote work. Through more than a year of pandemic disruption, associations have found that shifting their whole culture to a digital mindset can bring about the changes necessary to operate flexibly and virtually for the long term.

by Mark Athitakis

he COVID-19 crisis prompted a lot of associations to become digital organizations in a hurry—or at least to think they did.

No question, associations made lots of changes. Remote-work mandates forced staff to get comfortable with video chats. In-person training sessions became webinars. Annual conferences became virtual events blending recorded material and live presentations. But creating a patchwork of online replacements for in-person activities isn't the same thing as becoming a digital-first association.

"You can upgrade all of your software but not actually change how you do things," says Maddie Grant, digital strategist at the consultancy Propel. "And there are so many associations that are sitting on technology that they literally don't even know how to use."

Being "digital first" isn't necessarily about those tools anyway. "Digital first is our approach, not because digital is the end goal, but because people are the end goal—the goal is creating value for the customer," says Simona Rollinson, chief technology officer at ISACA, an association of IT governance professionals. "Sometimes a digital solution may actually take value away. It may be more impersonal."

Elizabeth Weaver Engel, MA, CAE, chief strategist at Spark Consulting and coauthor of a recent white paper with Grant on digital transformation in associations, says many organizations erred during the pandemic by failing to think holistically about staff and member needs in the rush to deliver digital conferences.

"It's about board support, it's C-suite support, it may involve some hiring or shifting of responsibilities," she says. "You need to devote additional resources behind cultural change and audience research. It's not just, 'Oh, we have to fund this platform.'"

So rather than thinking about technological replacements for analog processes, products, or programs, think of being "digital first" as part



Digital-first is our approach, not because digital is the end goal, but because people are the end goal—the goal is creating value for the customer.

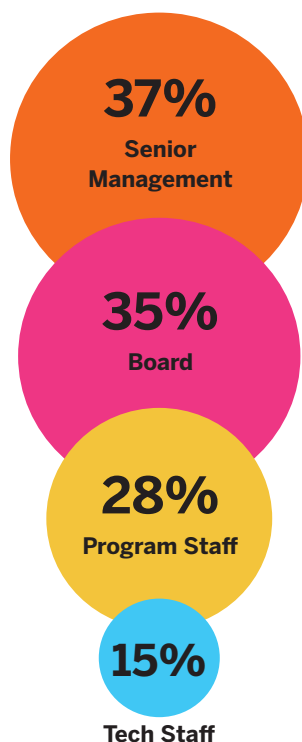
—Simona Rollinson, ISACA



Work in Progress

According to a report from Salesforce in late 2020, nonprofits are still slowly making their way through digital transformation. Only 16 percent of the organizations surveyed demonstrated “high digital maturity.”

Where are the trouble spots? Mostly at the top. Participants were asked which groups need to be more comfortable with technology. Those who needed the most help:



SOURCE: *Salesforce.org, Nonprofit Trends Report, Third Edition, 2020*

of a cultural shift. What are your organization’s strategic goals, and how can digital tools satisfy them—or not? How will you ensure the shift is part of the whole organization, not just the new widget in the meetings department? Changing your organization’s mindset toward digital doesn’t necessarily mean losing all your in-person meetings or print publications. It means better equipping your association to handle the next disruption.

Preparation Pays

ISACA had been moving toward more online training before the pandemic, using a new hosting platform for its webinars. The goal was to better engage with a growing international membership. The one area where it remained old-school was its

certification tests, which were held in person with proctors in the room.

But because ISACA already had the grounding in online training, the shift to online proctoring during COVID-19 was less of a challenge than it might have been.

“Our strong relationship with the testing vendor helped us to go to the front of the line,” says Nader Qaimari, chief product officer. “Things shut down at the end of March [2020], and by mid-April we were actually up and running with remote proctoring.”

Similarly, the Infectious Diseases Society of America was equipped to go digital before the pandemic. In 2018 IDSA conducted a comprehensive digital audit of its activities, both for staff and members. That led to a variety of small changes, from new phone systems to online collaboration tools.

Taken together, says David Moldavsky, vice president of digital and technology strategy at IDSA, they created a digital-first mindset that allowed the organization to adapt quickly during the pandemic—a crisis that cut to the heart of IDSA’s mission.

“The digital channels that we set up over the last few years really helped us in communicating and supporting our members, and we ramped all that up around COVID,” he says. “Together with the CDC, we’ve run clinician calls that bring in at least 1,000 people. We also set up a COVID website and online communities for members, and that wouldn’t be possible if we hadn’t put that infrastructure in place.”

Starting From Scratch

But associations that didn’t think seriously about digital until the pandemic don’t have to be left behind. Before COVID-19, the International Ombudsman Association derived more than half its revenue from an introductory three-day, in-person course for new and aspiring ombuds. So the pandemic hit IOA hard: It forced the association to cancel all seven of its planned training courses for 2020.

But IOA speedily invested in a learning management system and instructional design consultant, which allowed it to launch three virtual courses in late 2020, all of which sold out. The additional cash outlay deepened the deficit already created from lost course revenue, says Lindsay Jennings, vice president of business development at SBI Association Management, the AMC that operates IOA. But the investment gave IOA the footing to increase its offerings in 2021. It added eight virtual courses designed to meet a newfound international audience.

“It’s definitely let the association gain confidence, knowing that they can produce a virtual program for such an intensive course,” Jennings says.

Similarly, the Society for the Advancement of Material and Process Engineering was caught flat-footed by the pandemic. It held no member webinars, and its meetings were entirely in-person.



“We were analog. There was nothing [digital],” says Christine Locke, director of marketing, membership, and education. As a stopgap, SAMPE made video of sessions from a previous conference available as members-only content. That became the seed that led to a larger retooling of the association’s online presence—a premium site called SAMPE 365 that’s a repository for video content, collaboration tools, research, and other digital assets.

That move required some org-chart reshuffling, Locke says, as well as a cultural shift that reoriented the staff to focus on online training. “Our team had to quickly understand the value of digital education and delivering that content,” she says. “Creating content that’s now all-digital has been a culture shock because they never

Creating content that’s now all-digital has been a culture shock because they never had to do that before. But now we’re doing it nearly every day.

—Christine Locke, *Society for the Advancement of Material and Process Engineering*

had to do that before. But now we’re doing it nearly every day.”

Any shift to digital must be managed carefully, says Dan Stevens, president of WorkerBee.tv, Inc., an association digital consultancy.

“People forget that as soon as you go digital, you have a whole new set of competitors—YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn,” he says. But he notes that associations have the benefit of unique content, which can be repurposed in a variety of digital forms. Presentations, for example, can be broken up for use in microlearning,

podcasts, teaser videos, documentaries, and more.

“It’s easier to start with a video to make a podcast or turn it into an article than it is to go the other way around,” Stevens says.

No More Silos

Making this strategy effective requires buy-in from leadership. “CEOs are used to implementing through departments, but that’s not the way to do digital transformation,” Stevens says. He recommends that associations create “transformation teams” that work across departments to “find the opportunities where friction for member engagement can be taken out and new media models can be implemented.”

Maddie Grant concurs. “If all your innovative activity is siloed in one department, like the meetings department trying virtual conference software, none of those lessons learned about how people learn virtually gets translated to the other departments,” she says. “They’re all doing their stuff the same way they always did. That’s not digital transformation.”

That kind of silo-busting was a key element of ISACA’s success with digital, says Qaimari.

“We had a vertical structure—our direct-to-consumer product team, our enterprise business team, our membership team, all operating as little business units,” he says. “Being more of a functional organization forced us to be more dependent on each other. You had to be more deliberate about communication, but people realized it and did the work.”

MARK ATHITAKIS is a contributing editor to *Associations Now*. Email: mathitakis@asaecenter.org

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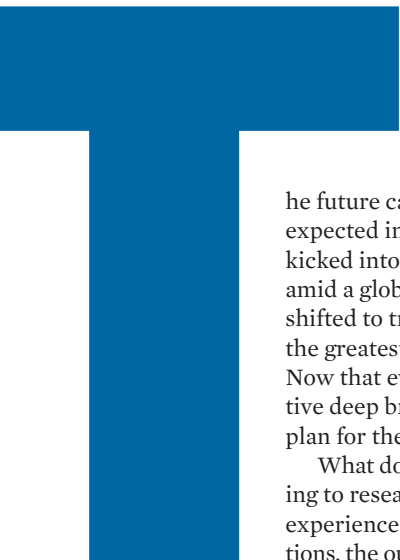
The Future of Membership Is

Looking at membership in a new way means being inclusive at every level and reimagining what a member is—and needs. Definitions and outdated molds need to be redefined and recast for a sustainable, holistic, and realistic membership strategy. **by Lisa Boylan**



NOW





he future came a lot faster than expected in 2020 when innovation kicked into high gear out of necessity amid a global pandemic. Associations shifted to triage mode, responding to the greatest needs of members first. Now that everyone has taken a collective deep breath (sort of), it's time to plan for the future of membership.

What does that look like? According to research, experts, and recent experience in a variety of associations, the outlook is mixed, but largely promising.

Earlier reports this year about the state of associations did not have great news, but it wasn't all dire. McKinley Advisors' 2021 *Association Viewpoint* report showed that the number of associations reporting membership declines nearly doubled in one year, with professional associations being particularly hard hit and trade associations faring slightly better.

The upside? According to Marketing General Incorporated's 2021 *Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report*, 45 percent of association professionals surveyed said membership's five-year trend was still positive, even though the one-year trend was down.

"We had a bump in the road, but overall, there has still been a tradition of positive growth for association membership," says Tony Rossell, MGI's senior vice president and coauthor of the study.

Membership 2.0

Evidence of that optimism can be found in the American Chemical Society's new plan—Membership 2.0—which takes membership to a more accessible, affordable, and diverse level. ACS, like many associations, had been struggling with declining membership and was looking for ways to reverse that trend.

In 2018, ACS began developing a strategy to transform its membership model with the goal of growing membership, increasing the engagement of its industrial members, and better connecting with global constituents and underrepresented communities.

"Thinking outside the box is critical for organizations to think of

diversity in the broadest terms," says LaTrease Garrison, ACS's executive vice president of membership and education. "It's important to consider whether the organization has been catering to a broad population within a professional discipline or limiting itself to certain segments."

By taking a deeper dive into its processes, the ACS team realized the organization was focusing on the daily acquisition of members to reach growth targets, but without a clear rationale beyond growth for growth's sake. They decided to work toward creating a model that would attract and engage members more organically. If they could do that, they could focus more of their resources on engagement and a better value proposition more tailored to members. Overall, Garrison says, ACS's primary value for members will continue to be the networking it provides and its "power of convening."

A robust value proposition is essential. In MGI's 2021 report, association professionals said they felt much more strongly that they were providing a essential value to members, Rossell says. Nearly eight in 10 respondents said they did so by introducing new products and services to better serve members.

"We always see a strong correlation between organizations that have a strong value proposition and their likelihood in seeing an increase in membership," Rossell says.

The strength in value is also a good sign because, while associations have lost members over the past year, those losses tended to be more about pandemic uncertainty, worry about the economic situation, and a loss of jobs.

"It's a problem when people say there is no value at an association," Rossell says. "But if people leave because of an economic disruption, it's much more likely those people will come back."

MEMBERSHIP PULSE CHECK

SOURCE: Marketing General Incorporated, 2021 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report



We always see a strong correlation between organizations that have a strong value proposition and their likelihood in seeing an increase in membership.

— Tony Rossell, Marketing General Incorporated

Pillars of Strength—and Innovation

ACS's Membership 2.0 model is being constructed by five work teams, made up primarily of membership staff, that are each dedicated to a pillar supporting the overall structure. Each team has individual objectives and specific targets. The pillars are:

- **A new membership model** that will provide flexible and scalable membership offerings to stay current with member demands and increase member value.

- **Smart growth and member value** to remove barriers to entry,



45%

of associations said their membership's five-year trend was still positive even though the one-year trend was down.

78%

of respondents said during the past year they had developed new products and services.

29%

said they had been very or extremely innovative over the past year.

It's All About the Member

McKinley Advisors' 2021 *Association Viewpoint* report centers on the notion that there is no collective without the individual, noting that it is sometimes easy to lose sight of the unique needs and perspectives of the members who make up those communities.

"Associations have traditionally taken a really broad approach to serving their members," says Shelley Sanner, CAE, who oversaw the research. When associations began to pivot last year, they "started thinking about how to serve each person in a more customized way."

The report shows that long-term sustainability will require strategic commitments. The top three priorities for 2021, according to respondents, are:

42%
generate
nondues
revenue

39%
focus on
diversity,
equity, and
inclusion

27%
improve
member
retention

Associations are going to have to assess themselves and ask big questions, says Sanner. Questions like: "How can we make membership more valuable—not just from a transactional perspective or from a communications perspective—but by making it more meaningful?"—**L.B.**

identify new markets, and develop a structured process for new benefits.

- **Member engagement with personalized experiences** to add elements of personalization to member communications, events, and online platforms.

- **Data for better insights** to better assess how members are making decisions about ACS membership.

- **A win-win culture** focused on a unified goal to be more member-centric by keeping the member experience at the center of every business decision.

ACS began the process three years ago, but the pandemic amplified the importance of a revised model. "It demonstrated the need to communicate with our members differently and look at how they engage with the organization to make sure we're presenting a diverse portfolio of opportunities for them to engage with us," Garrison says.

That kind of innovation is a positive indicator for associations, Rossell says. Over the years he has observed that groups with an innovative

culture "are much more likely to see their membership grow." MGI's 2021 report showed that 29 percent of respondents said their associations were very or extremely innovative in 2020, up from 20 percent in 2019. "It is an encouraging sign for associations in general, but also for membership," he says.

ACS staff worked with consultants on research to gauge the best places to focus resources and talent. It was a collective effort that reviewed the landscape of the association world and membership organizations to make sure the group hit the right targets. ACS's membership committee was involved in the process and helped guide final decisions about what direction to head in.

"Knowing the audience is going to continue to be a very important factor for associations to consider as they think about their membership growth opportunities and where they may need to make changes," Garrison says.

Meet Members Where They Are

ACS's new membership model will ensure that members can choose how they want to participate instead of having one menu of options with one price. ACS will now offer three distinct packages, including a free membership option with no prerequisites for people who have an interest in chemistry but who don't need the full suite of benefits available to practicing chemistry professionals. The other two options are a mid-point membership for those who do not find value in full membership or are transitioning between careers, and a full membership that provides access to all member benefits.

"Providing that menu of opportunities is going to make things more flexible for the individual as they come to ACS," Garrison says. "We are going to be able to better meet people where they are."

Garrison also hopes the new model will bring in more diverse members by indicating that people who work in chemistry don't have to have a Ph.D. to be successful—or to be a member of ACS. A lot of people assumed that without a Ph.D., they weren't welcome at the organization, she says. The new model will open doors for new people to participate when the time is right for them.

Garrison also anticipates it will create a better pipeline for future leaders who can access the organization at a lower tier but still have exposure to how ACS operates and what its governance cycle is like. When they are ready to get more involved, they will be comfortable taking on a volunteer role within the organization.

The potential for new volunteers is promising. "Our membership,

You have to have a future-forward outlook. I'm hoping this causes us to stretch and be more inclusive in the broader sense.

— LaTrease Garrison,
American Chemical Society

especially our local chapters, is going to get great value, because now they can reach out to their local chemists, chemical sciences students, and really pitch ACS in a different way for them to come and join," Garrison says.

ACS also looked at how to better engage with the younger generation—both undergraduate and graduate students. Younger members have always been engaged in many of the programs, products, and services ACS offers. The group has had undergraduate chapters since the 1930s, but in 2019 they started graduate student chapters. But better aligning undergraduate and graduate students and not making such a distinct difference between who they are and what benefits they get will teach them about teamwork, Garrison says.

"It allows them to see ACS as a community," she says, which will help keep them aligned with the organization for the long haul. "Our philosophy around membership and how we're changing is really going to help us to do that."

Garrison says Membership 2.0 is about more than offering different membership packages. Such large structural change requires knowing how you're going to communicate differently, if you have the right systems in place, and what the financial investment will be.

"You have to have a future-forward outlook," she says. "I'm hoping this causes us to stretch and be more inclusive in the broader sense."

LISA BOYLAN is a senior editor at *Associations Now*. Email: lboylan@asaecenter.org



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BOOKS

Time to Rethink

THE CASE FOR UNLEARNING AND RELEARNING
By Kristin Clarke, CAE

SOMETIMES A book comes along that hits at just the right time to resonate universally. *Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know*—penned by bestselling organizational psychologist Adam Grant—tops the list for 2021.

In considering his next book, Grant wondered how he could use his talent for research, analysis, and storytelling to help diminish the polarization destabilizing key elements of current American life. He settled on exploring why we develop and ferociously defend our beliefs—often despite contradictory facts—and how we can guide others to choose to change their minds.

With his trademark humor, Grant calls us to his core takeaway: a redefinition of “lifelong learning” as adoption of an ongoing process of unlearning, relearning, and questioning our assumptions and beliefs.

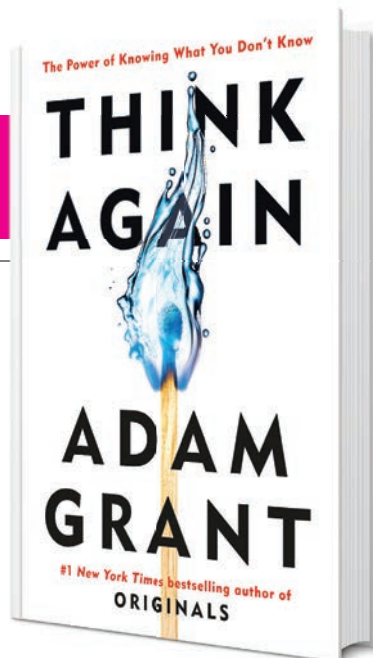
But these steps aren't easy. Rethinking requires active listening, reflection, curiosity, courage, openness, and especially authentic humility.

“The risk is that we become so wrapped up in preaching that we're right, prosecuting others who are wrong, and politicking for support that we don't bother to rethink our own views,” he writes. Instead of inner preacher, prosecutor, and politician, as he references throughout, Grant urges adoption of the skeptical, open mindset of a scientist, especially when entering highly charged conversations.

Among his myriad role models are a “vaccine whisperer” whose respectful empathy and questions prompted hundreds of hesitant patients to vaccinate their families against measles, and a Black musician who combines shared musical passion with the question “How can you hate me when you don't even know me?” to inspire Ku Klux Klan members to abandon prejudice in favor of friendship.

Grant nails the case for upskilling organizations to cultivate a rethinking culture.

[VIKING; 320 PAGES; \$28]



GOOD BUSINESS: THE TALK, FIGHT, WIN WAY TO CHANGE THE WORLD

By Bill Novelli



ALTHOUGH BEST known as former CEO of AARP and COO of CARE, Bill Novelli has played in all corners of America's economic sandbox. *Good Business* starts with Novelli's early days of pioneering social marketing, then charts his carefully plotted career as a changemaker.

Novelli's political and organizational battles—told through insider stories of triumph, failure, and endurance—reveal him to be a consummate coalition builder and big-sky dreamer. His AARP tenure, for instance, led to the redefining of retirement, aging, and end-of-life care, eventually shaping phenomenal membership growth and creating an advocacy powerhouse. As head of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Novelli and his allies protected millions of children from smoking addiction and possible illness and death.

Now a Georgetown University professor, he urges leaders to likewise adopt social responsibility as a driver of organizational expansion and impactful change.

Simultaneously an intimate memoir and public call to action.

[JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS; 352 PAGES; \$27.95]

MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT: HOW TO GROW RECURRING REVENUE, REACH NEW MARKETS, AND ADVANCE YOUR MISSION

By Tony Rossell



MEMBERSHIP growth is tough in the best of times, and more so during a global pandemic. In *Membership Recruitment*, Tony Rossell of Marketing General Incorporated combines 30 years of membership experience with his company's historical and latest data to refocus organizations on traditional core strategies that work, while also leveraging ever-changing communication tactics.

Broken into three parts, the book emphasizes why association membership is still important, how building organizational resilience ensures long-term sustainability, and why ongoing recruitment trumps retention for membership growth. Addressing common questions about the “building blocks” of membership, Rossell covers the need for consistency; what's-in-it-for-me messaging; relentless testing, tracking, and analyzing of results; and leveraging marketing innovations such as texting, retargeting, market expansion, and new membership models.

A must-have reminder and guide for every membership professional.

[MARKETING GENERAL INCORPORATED; 136 PAGES; \$17.95]

CAREER COACH

Post-Pandemic Change

FOUR WAYS TO FIND A NEW CAREER

BY SUSAN HENRIQUES-PAYNE

The pandemic changed our lives in good ways and bad. One upside: It gives you a new perspective. Surprising as it sounds, many people are planning a drastic career change right now. Here are some steps you can take to launch your post-COVID career.

Take stock of your assets.

Consider all your previous roles and the key skills you may have acquired. In addition, think about your personal qualities and what you bring to the table. Do you have experience doing what you want to do? If the answer is no, don't let that be the end: Transferable skills and a passion for the role might be enough to get your foot in the door.

**Talk to a professional.**

If you really are flipping your career on its head and moving into something completely new, professional guidance could be a huge asset. A good career coach will work out the steps you need to take and hold you accountable for taking them. A coach is particularly useful if you're feeling stuck and don't know where to start, or if you're looking for a career in a newer field and need information on what's out there and how to pursue it.

Start networking.

A weird side effect of COVID? People are much more up for a phone call than they used to be. Get on LinkedIn and seek out people at all levels of seniority in the field you're looking to enter, and don't be afraid to reach out by phone. Find out what it's like both to climb the ladder and to be at the top.

Talk to friends.

When you're looking for networking opportunities, don't forget to ask your friends who they know; they may be a lifeline. However, don't put too much stock in your friends' opinions about your career plans. If someone doesn't like your choices, see it as a useful opportunity to defend them—including to yourself.

Susan Henriques-Payne, MA, CPCC, ACC, is an independent career strategist and life coach.

HOW I GOT HERE

Barry Schieferstein, CMP, DES, CTA

- DIRECTOR OF LEARNING AND EVENTS
- AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR NONDESTRUCTIVE TESTING
- COLUMBUS, OHIO

Barry Schieferstein, CMP, DES, CTA, says having a customer-service-first attitude, instilled by many years in retail sales management, helped him to successfully begin a second career in learning and meeting planning. "Customer service is not only important to member relations, but it also applies to our vendors," he says. Here are some notable stops on his career journey:

"OUR VENDOR RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS ARE JUST AS IMPORTANT TO THE OVERALL SUCCESS OF THE ASSOCIATION AS THE PRODUCTS BEING OFFERED."



A Working History





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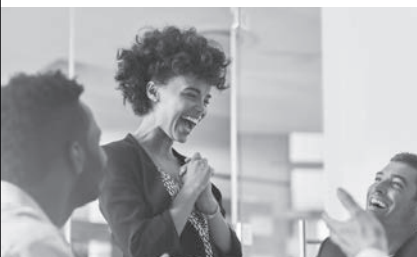


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Founded in 1910, the **American Camp Association** brings together camp professionals so they can share their knowledge and experience to ensure quality camps. The organization has more than 12,000 diverse members who focus on creating camping experiences that teach about community, character building, skill development, and healthy living. ACA strives to be a leading voice in its field, champion quality among programs, and expand the reach, equity, and access of camps to diverse communities.

INTERNATIONAL CAMPING FELLOWSHIP

Camping professionals around the world can learn from each other through the **International Camping Fellowship**. Founded in 1987, the organization serves camping professionals interested in sharing their "enthusiasm, knowledge, and commitment to the outdoor experience." Every three years, ICF holds an International Camping Congress for members. Meetings have been held in various locations around the world, including Melbourne, Australia; Antalya, Turkey; Sochi, Russia; and Hong Kong.

CHILDREN'S ONCOLOGY CAMPING ASSOCIATION- INTERNATIONAL

Most camping professionals laud the benefits of camp to children. Unfortunately, when kids are sick with cancer, medication protocols and health concerns can make it hard to participate in this beneficial activity. That's why **Children's Oncology Camping Association-International** formed. The group was founded in 1982 in the U.S. and later expanded to include camps around the world. COCA-I wants to ensure camps that serve children undergoing oncology care have the best practices, latest data, and experts to turn to for advice.

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Omaha is open for business and ready to welcome your hybrid or in-person meeting. Though Omaha is currently under no restrictions, all meeting facilities, hotels, restaurants and attractions still follow strict health and sanitation protocols to ensure you and your guests feel comfortable long after your meeting ends. The city is also getting a makeover to provide new experiences to convention visitors. Currently, more than \$4.6 billion is being spent developing, enhancing, and modernizing the city.

These days, conventions and meetings need a little more room to roam - Omaha is ready to deliver.

