

ASSOCIATION ADVISOR

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President's Message

GCSAE President Laura Nakoneczny, CAE
National Association of College Stores

Lessons Taught by a Donkey

Here at NACS, everyone is immersed in the details surrounding our upcoming annual meeting/tradeshows. Since the meeting coincides with the end of our fiscal year, it's a month that breeds reflection. Like everyone else, we remember all the great accomplishments of the past year and finalize our plans for the year ahead.

So maybe I was just predisposed to being reflective when a good friend at an association in Washington sent me an e-mail containing a story about a donkey. (I really need to learn to be more aggressive with my delete key.) Still, it has good messages so I've decided to share it here as well. Here goes...

One day a farmer's donkey fell down into a well. The animal cried loudly for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do.

Finally the farmer decided the animal was old, and the well needed to be covered up anyway. It just wasn't worth it to retrieve the donkey. So he invited all his neighbors to come over and help him solve the problem. They each grabbed a shovel and began to shovel dirt into the well.

At first, the donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly. But then, to everyone's amazement, he quieted down. A few shovel loads later, the farmer looked down the

well and was astonished at what he saw. As every shovel of dirt hit his back, the donkey did something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up. As the farmer's neighbors continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up.

Pretty soon, everyone was amazed as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and trotted off.

The moral to the story is easy to relate to: Life is going to shovel dirt on you, all *kinds* of dirt. The trick to getting out of the well is to shake it off and take a step up.

But there were other lessons here that I liked and that seemed to apply directly to managing associations. For example:

- Conditions are never "just right";
- Destiny is a matter of choice, not chance;
- Complacency is the most dangerous attitude;
- Imagination is more important than knowledge; and
- Innovation only comes when people do what's not expected.

Association management is certainly not a career choice for the timid. This year, I resolve to be more like the donkey... and a lot less like his boss. How about you?

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GCSAE Schedule of Events

- February 11** **Breakfast Seminar**
at I-X Center
Identity Theft
Presenter: Dr. Amy Jo Sutterluety
- March 11** **CEO Roundtable followed by Luncheon Seminar**
with ASAE President & CEO
John Graham
at Sheraton Hotel Cleveland
City Centre
- April 22** **Afternoon Seminar**
1:00 - 3:00 PM
at Kent State Stark Campus
Convention Center
Topic to be announced
- May 20** **Annual Meeting**
at Embassy Suites

**Thinking of Running for a
GCSAE Board Position?**

GCSAE NEEDS YOU!

**Contact Mark Laskey at
216/398-9860
for more information**

In's and Out's for Associations and Nonprofits for 2004

Below please find our list of trends, issues and predictions for the future based on current and proposed practices evident from our program attendee input, surveys over the past year and input from a variety of association and nonprofit executives. Over the past five years, since we have been doing this annual edition of in's and out's, some have come to pass, some appear to be still in the works, and some are still out in right field! Many of the findings and predictions are reflective of our client database of over 500 trade and professional associations, while others are reflective of association management and other guru's and their thinking on various subjects. Some are tongue in cheek, but most speak to the ever-changing management and practices of our ever-evolving profession and community.

Again, this has been a particularly difficult year for the association community, with recessionary and security considerations forcing many association to "review and renew" programs, services, budgets and ways of doing business. These trends seem to be here for the short term and, as indicated, some for the long term as well. See where your association is on the trend lines presented. If you are on the right side of most trends, consider your association moving in the right direction. If you are on the wrong side of most trends, see what you can do to take positive steps to get moving in the right direction. Not all trends will affect all associations, so use good judgment when you select trends that are important to your association.

Most of all, this column is written to bring you out of the trenches for a few minutes and review the association from a more future oriented perspective!

TRENDS IN, OR COMING IN

Association governance and management structural models continue to evolve based on speed and quick reaction to events and with simplicity in mind. This unlayering and restructuring is taking 18 months to three years to fully take effect, so the sooner the association begins, the better. Expect a degree of turbulence and resistance to change, as power centers are reallocated, but better to bite the bullet now, as it can only get worse as time goes on.

TRENDS OUT, OR GOING OUT

Associations unwilling to start from scratch to restructure, or which put politics before structure and continue to be all things to all constituencies. Disengaging from politics going forward will be the "change" methodology of the future, and enable all stakeholders to discern the new structure first and deal with the politics as the last part of the process. Ensure appointments to restructuring committees are not tasked with representing their own constituencies, but the entire association. Look towards establishing criteria, which helps this committee gain the degree of objectivity necessary to see the treetops instead of the branches.

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Written for the
1st Edition of
*Association
Trends in 2004*
By
Stephen C.
Carey, Ph.D.
CAE

Cleveland Rocks Your Bottom Line, All The Way Up To 10!

Meeting planners can strum up a whole new kind of savings to their organization's bottom line when they book in Cleveland in 2004-2005.

Introducing Rock Your Bottom Line!



Groups that book a meeting in 2004-2005 with a participating Cleveland hotel can apply a 10% savings of their total room revenue to the bottom line of their master account. And groups can even get the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame + Museum for free!

"Rock Your Bottom Line! is a strong value proposition of hotels, special venues, transportation and education partnerships. No other city has assembled a partnership like this," says Joe Zion, executive vice president for the CVB of Greater Cleveland.

"The first incentive is that Cleveland provides the superb service our meeting guests are accustomed to, in a city that is vibrant and filled with wonderful entertainment options, including a dynamic downtown. The second incentive is the savings: the more rooms you fill with attendees, the greater the savings to your organization's bottom line."

Value to the program is also added through the CVB, which will invest in a meeting's education if the association books a speaker with the Ohio office of the National Speakers Association. Continental Airlines' MeetingWorks program provides planners with bonus points that can be turned into upgrades, free tickets and more.

RYBL was launched in January to an audience of meeting and association executives throughout the country. The plan includes an integrated plan of direct mail, advertising, telemarketing, and online marketing efforts.

Meeting planners can learn more about the program by visiting RockYourBottomLine.com. Once there, visitors enter a special promotional code. Lucky meeting executives will receive gift certificates good for concert tickets in their own hometown. The Web site will offer visitors the ability to send an RFP and try out a unique calculator, where they can see just how much savings to their bottom line the program will offer, compared to other cities.

Meeting executives interested in impacting their organization's bottom line must book business through the CVB of Greater Cleveland.

This initiative follows on the heels of another one, **Hotels In Partnership**, or **HIP**. HIP was created by the CVB to instill a stronger sense of community among the Cleveland hotel community. "From lead referral, to taking customers on a site inspection, **HIP** is about working together for the greater good of business for everyone," says Zion.

GCSAE January Meeting Review

What would you do if Mike Wallace suddenly appeared at your office door? GCSAE members and guests were treated to a lively session on crisis communications and dealing with the media, which was held at the Wyndham Hotel in downtown Cleveland on January 22nd. Bruce Hennes, President of Hennes Communications, a public, media, community and government relations consulting firm, offered numerous practical techniques to aid in handling communications with the media--whether print, radio or television. Bruce gave insight on how the media thinks, how to handle the "ambush" interview, and why every business owner and association CEO should have a communications plan. He also showed a video which demonstrated what NOT to do in an interview situation. Time was allotted at the end of the meeting for questions, which prompted additional animated discussion. Immediately following the meeting, attendees were invited to take a tour of the Wyndham, led by Wyndham Sales Manager Anna Maria Russo.



Bruce Hennes offered guidelines on handling interviews with reporters.

Our Congratulations to NACS

The National Association of College Stores (NACS) has been elected to the 2004 Associations Advance America Honor Roll, a national awards competition sponsored by the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) Washington, DC.

NACS received the award for a campaign that sought to increase college students' use of textbooks. Research conducted by NACS found that while students purchased most of their required course materials, 45% of the students surveyed reported they do not purchase all of their required course materials, putting their education at risk.

Now in its 14th year, the prestigious Associations Advance America Awards program recognizes associations that propel America forward with innovative projects in education, skills training, standards setting, business and social innovation, knowledge creation, citizenship, and community service. Although association activities have a powerful impact on everyday life, they often go unnoticed by the general public.

"NACS' program truly embodies the spirit of the Associations Advance America campaign. It is an honor and an inspiration to showcase this activity as an example of the many contributions associations are making to advance American society," remarked Associations Advance America Committee Chair Kris Cook, CAE, Executive Director, National Affordable Housing Management Association.

In's and Out's . . .

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TRENDS IN, OR COMING IN

A new component of the governance structure model to “manage” the volunteer assets and units of the association, as more associations move to an integrated Task Force/Ad Hoc/Advisory Committee structure. This component called the Governance Manpower Management Committee has the charge of managing volunteer assets, distributing them to the appropriate governance unit at the right time, and evaluating and rewarding them as appropriate. This new and critical volunteer management component is necessary as associations revise governance structures, which need a new degree of management not necessary with older paradigms.

A movement toward a needed long term approach to developing the goals and objectives of the organization based on the longer-term value equation, purpose and mission of the association. A shift away from the “what have you done for me this quarter” syndrome, and a shift back towards longer-term missions (Review The Coca Cola Company operating philosophy against quarterly review of profits because, by doing so, it damages movement towards the longer term goals of the company). Visions are longer term in nature and missions carry out a slice of the vision for the immediate 12-18 month period.

TRENDS OUT, OR GOING OUT

Establishing new governance structures without appropriate volunteer controls and personnel systems to manage them.

Boards still focused on short-term objectives.

Many associations are beginning to use an organized research based program and organizational assessment approach to redefining scope and aligning programs with new goals and objectives and allocating resources accordingly. This approach ensures that decisions are made based on qualitative and quantitative member assessment methods, that define member needs, so that planning is inclusive and programs address them.

Analyzing impact demographics, which will affect the leadership and management structures of associations will begin to take noticeable effect mid-decade (04-06). Demographic diversity and transparency will impact the way associations conduct governance and business operations for the foreseeable future. Smart associations have already completed focused demographic impact studies, and are now doing program assessment research to ensure they align in all areas with coming dramatic demographic shifts. Some associations have created managerial positions for strategic research and future studies, while others have adopted an outsource approach. Either way “turns on the lights” and gives the association visibility of future needs.

Re-looking at dues structure with the thought in mind to ensure value meets dues. Considering different levels of dues based on a menu of programs and services.

Learning how to say and spell “NO”.

Sarbanes-Oxley is coming to an association or nonprofit near you soon! Beginning now to re-structure as necessary for compliance will put you ahead of the game.

Relying on what the board or staff thinks is best for the members based on a few informal conversations with members in the field.

Associations, which do not pay close attention to impact work force, social and cultural demographics will not survive the decade.

Continuing to use the “one size fits all” approach, without looking at other more creative options.

Always saying yes.

Boards that are not revising their policies and procedures to be more responsible in the financial and governance areas, by establishing tighter control and reports.

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In's and Out's . . .

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TRENDS IN, OR COMING IN

The continuing recognition and need to use a variety of delivery vehicles to deliver the association's message and product. Less dependency on e-mail and continued use of traditional vehicles such as direct mail (still the best) and broadcast fax. E-mail marketing of most products, programs and services will continue to rise as more and more members shop electronically. More emphasis on the formula of: news briefs going via e-mail and longer newsletters via mail, as associations recognize that there is a reason the Post Office has not gone out of business. Ensuring you have a balanced communications and marketing vehicle mix based on member input as to how they like to receive communications from the association.

Strategic plans, which are simple and define fewer goals and objectives so that the association can actually focus on and accomplish the most important tasks. Gone are three syllable words that have no meaning in execution and delivery of valued products, programs and services. Also, ensuring that alternative realities are built into planning cycles, as more and more associations realize, that at some point in time, the percentages dictate that alternative realities will come to pass.

Reviewing carefully international operations from a reality perspective. Establishing realistic dues and program structures, which account for real costs of delivering association product to non-US members or International chapters or affiliates. Understanding that "going international" requires considerable commitment and resources.

TRENDS OUT, OR GOING OUT

Depending more and more on one delivery vehicle, such as e-mail, without considering the use of a balanced approach.

Associations that create strategic plans that are not tied to budgets and resources, or which ignore future operating realities. Unfortunately, many associations pay lip service to alternative realities and do not hardwire contingency plans into policies and procedures. The litmus test is whether or not your association has purchased a satellite phone for communications in times of national or other emergency.

Continuing to pay lip service to international segments of the membership, disregarding financial realities and not providing adequate representation. Not creating the procedural and policy frameworks in governance, communications and marketing to manage international growth.

More and more associations outsourcing I/T operations and functions in web based environments, using data farms and storage facilities. Saving substantially on personnel related and hardware costs. The outsourcing of functions, such as membership administration, meetings, publications, and other functional areas, continues at a gathering pace.

Investigating the use of web logs and more interactive “messenger” services and their applicability to helping members solve problems.

The increasing importance of peer communication and interaction as a tangible value component of the association. With fewer face-to-face opportunities, members crave peer interaction, often to the detriment of educational programming. In many instances, peer to peer meetings (education) takes place in the hallways with fewer attendees at some sessions.

Using a process of heightened and focused discernment during deliberations of the association. Less anger in the boardroom. Working more together as a team.

The in's, trends, benchmarks and best practices above, which many associations are moving toward, is where the savvy association executive and volunteer leader wants to assist in leading the association. It's not easy, but adopting a few of them, depending on your position in the marketplace, will keep you moving in the right direction. Best wishes for a great 2004!

Creator of the *2004 Association and Nonprofit Marketing and Communications Planning Guide*, Dr. Carey may be reached at scarey@ammr.com.

Doing everything related to I/T and other functions in house.

Relying on traditional list serves that are cumbersome to administer, not adequately policed and not taking advantage of “community” based software.

Not provide sufficient peer-to-peer opportunities and experiences. Better to extend the coffee and cocktail hours than try to cram in more education.

Factionalism in the governance structure creating a poor environment, in which to make important decisions.



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GCSAE, 3487 Center Road, Suite 6C, Brunswick, OH 44212

Deadline for submission is the 10th of each month.

Looking for a practical introduction to the basics?

Try the ASAE School of Association Management Online. All courses follow a detailed syllabus that outlines the weekly schedule of study and related required readings and assignments. There are no live sessions to attend. All online courses are conducted in an asynchronous fashion - they do not take place in real time - allowing participants to learn at their own pace and at the time of their choosing. Students can expect to devote three to four hours per week to complete online activities and additional readings. Courses are developed with the assistance of ASAE volunteer experts, who serve as content advisors and course facilitators.

The online conference area or "discussion board" enables participants to communicate with each other and the course facilitators. To make the most of this learning opportunity, you are encouraged to participate in the online discussions as much as possible. The interactive exchange of thoughts and ideas will provide you the opportunity to learn what others are thinking and doing on key association issues.

Participants will not be tested or graded, but if you complete all of the course requirements you will receive a course certificate and earn credit toward the CAE designation. You will earn 18 hours of CAE credit for completion of any 6-week online course and 12 hours for completion of any 4-week online course.

For more information, go to the ASAE School of Association Management Online at

<http://desktopasae.certilearn.com/home/>

