

Where Non-Profit and Association Leaders Connect, Innovate and Grow

InView



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COVID 19 AND ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT WHAT NOW?

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed every aspect of our business and personal lives for many years to come. What are the implications for associations and the way we operate? How will it impact the associations we manage?

I started my association management career in 1977 after a career in government. As I sat in my office, with absolutely no clue what I was supposed to be doing, I stumbled upon an organization called the New York Society of Association Executives (NYSAE).

When I think about what I learned and how I learned from being an NYSAE member, my thoughts are based upon a variety of factors and experiences. Yes, NYSAE has exceptional educational program, but just as important, if not even more important, was meeting and hearing from the other NYSAE members and listening to their issues and experiences in providing both successful and unsuccessful programs and services. It was the personal relationships and sharing of experiences, combined with the knowledge learned from the educational programs, that led to the continued success of the association I was managing.

COVID-19 has currently changed that, and perhaps for many years to come. So how does that effect the "what and how" of the way we manage our associations?

I don't know about you, but I am sick and tired of Zoom meetings, conference calls, virtual conferences of all types and lack of interaction of any kind with and between my members. And, more importantly, from what they are telling me---so are they.

So what does that mean for us? It probably means that whenever we can actually hold meetings they will be limited in attendance, and that will require more meetings. Where? In my office, we are limited to no more than 15 people in a conference room that can hold up to 35-40. With my board being 30-40 members when you include staff and visitors, that space doesn't work anymore.

How will associations that are dependent upon large gatherings for fundraising be able to hold those events again? Virtual fundraisers, conferences, etc.? Really? How many educational seminars and/or conferences can an association hold to generate a sufficient enough income to maintain, survive and grow economically over the next few years? Let's keep in mind that with an expected downturn in the economy in the immediate future---very few of our members and sponsors will have the revenue to support us as they have in the past.

One of the most important and beneficial value of membership in our associations is the human interaction---networking---that comes from the various membership programs we all sponsor. COVID-19 has changed that.

The ironic part of this is that today, more than ever before, our associations play an even more important role in addressing the significant issues their members will have to confront in the future; the social, economic and political challenges that face them, us, New York and the nation.

So how will this be achieved? It will be achieved through the association community, where our roles will continue to be to bring people together for a common purpose, and for those Associations to show their skillsets in getting associations of different constituencies and points of view together. By bringing all of their members together, the community can work to find common solutions to the problems that have profound impacts on us all.

That is why being a member of NYSAE is more important now than ever before. It is the association executives who must and can create the path for leading this effort. The only way forward is by both leading our respective individual associations and by creating the agenda in which ALL ASSOCIATIONS can work together on these issues.



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