

VANTAGE POINT

Published by WSAE - Where the association community thrives and grows ■ Winter 2021

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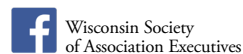
VantagePoint is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October. The deadline for submission of copy and advertising is the first of the month preceding publication. For information about advertising rates, contact the WSAE office. Copyright © WSAE 2021.

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New Ways to Meet Evolving Member Needs

by Michelle Vetterkind, CAE



First and foremost, I am humbled and honored to be your WSAE Chair for the coming year. I have been with the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association for 25 years, and when I joined WSAE in 1997 I never thought I would end up being Chair one day. Please know that this is truly an honor. I'm most excited to serve along with this year's Board, committees and membership. We all know success is most definitely a team effort.

Please join me in providing an extra special thank you to Immediate Past Chair, Kathy Raab, CAE. I'm sure you'll agree that Kathy did a terrific job, and not under the easiest of circumstances. Congratulations, Kathy, and thank you for your dedication and service to WSAE.

Also, thank you to Michelle Czosek, CAE; Lynda Patterson, CAE; and the wonderful team at WSAE (Chris Caple, Suzanna Hogendorn and Kristin McGuine) for all the support they provide to WSAE. They continue to do an excellent job, despite this past year's extra challenges.

IT'S AMAZING HOW MUCH ENERGY WE DERIVE FROM EACH OTHER. I DON'T THINK ANY OF US WILL EVER TAKE FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTION FOR GRANTED EVER AGAIN... WE'VE NEVER NEEDED EACH OTHER MORE THAN WE DO RIGHT NOW.

about is the newly formed Revenue Streams Task Force led by Denise Husenica, CAE. This task force will focus on finding additional revenue streams, not only to implement within WSAE, but also to share with all WSAE members. The goal is to keep the focus broader than just the financial aspect. I'm pleased to report that Denise and her team are already off to an excellent start. Stay tuned.

In reading the last issue of *VantagePoint*, a prominent recurring theme was education. WSAE has a stellar reputation for providing the most current, relevant and all-encompassing education. As a matter of fact, per the WSAE Strategic Plan, by 2022 our goal is to offer 25 hours of CAE-quality programming, including ethics. When you look at the tremendous number of educational offerings that WSAE provides (see the sidebar on this page, pages four and five of this publication or visit the WSAE website), I'm sure you'll agree that we're well on our way.

Like all of you, it's our desire is to get back to in-person events in a safe and responsible manner. In 2021, we look forward to hosting the WSAE Roadshow, our Spring Forward, SummerTime to Shine, and of course, Summit (which is rescheduled from last fall to be held at the Brookfield Conference Center). We

On that note, let's turn the page to 2021.

While things may continue to look a little different, please know that your WSAE Board is focusing on several new initiatives.

One that I'm most excited

Chair's message continues on page 14.



Calendar of Events

See the calendar at www.wsae.org for more information on these events, and to register.



WSAE Virtual Road Show 2021

Stop #1: March 4, 2021

Communicating Value to Maximize Member Engagement

Stop #2: March 18, 2021

Unpacking Hybrid Events



CEO Café: Your Virtual Morning Kickoff Roundtable
March 11, 2021



Webinar Series

Race for Relevance: Five Radical Changes for Associations
March 17, 2021

Work and Life Balance
March 24, 2021

The Fine Art of Building Relationships: Face-to-Face and Virtually
April 7, 2021

State Advocacy in the time of COVID-19
April 21, 2021

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For more Originals stories visit FoxCities.org/originals, or contact Amy Rivera at arivera@foxcities.org to plan your original event.    



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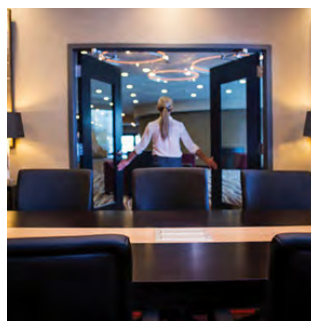


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Virtual Road Show Stop #1:

Communicating Value to Maximize Member Engagement

March 4, 2021 | 9:00-10:00 am CT

Member Engagement

Many associations are seeing long-term members drop. In this interactive session, we will discuss what engagement means to different member segments, how to define and measure value and engagement, and how to increase overall engagement. Key to engagement is value, we will have an open discussion on strategies and tips for educating potential members on the value of their association investment. Helping members to see your value beyond transactions.

We'll discuss tips for sharing why it is important to invest even if the potential member has limited time to be involved. Help prospects, members, and your industry understand the value that their investment brings to your overall mission and what engagement can mean to their company or business.



Presenter Shari Pash

Shari Pash, is Founder and Membership and Growth Strategist at Strategic Solutions for Growth, a training company headquartered in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Her work focuses on sustainable membership growth and Board of Director goal-setting and strategy sessions. Her work looks well beyond just maintaining the status quo, requiring innovation, creativity and a strategic approach. That's why chambers of commerce, non-profit organizations and associations throughout the United States and Canada are turning to Shari. Learn more at www.sharipash.com. ■

LinkedIn as a Member Engagement Strategy

Shari Shares some of her LinkedIn member engagement strategy tips with us, ahead of the Virtual Road Show in March.

Implementing LinkedIn into your member engagement strategy can bring immediate value and relevance to your members. With minimal time, each day, you can be front of mind with your members and keep informed of their company news.

Here are a few tips for using the free version of LinkedIn as a member engagement tool. Let's look at where you might find the best ROI for your time on LinkedIn.

Your LinkedIn profile

- Update your Profile with relevant and informative data.
 - If I come across your profile does it motivate me to contact you?
 - Do you have your basic business contact information listed?
 - Maximize your about/summary to talk to members.
- Strategically connect with as many members as you can.
 - This allows you another means of communication with them.
- Watch your profile wall for member posts from their individual LinkedIn profile.
 - Like, comment and share where appropriate.

- You carry a lot of credibility; this engagement has impact with your members.
- Let your members see you hanging out where they hang out.

Members' LinkedIn company pages

- Follow your members' company pages.
 - They will feed you insights that are important to them.
 - Use this information for engagement.
 - Like, comment and share where appropriate.
 - They will appreciate your support of their company news.

Association's LinkedIn group

- Consider creating a group for your organization.
- This is a forum where the members of this group can post information important to their industry or company. Provides a spot for digital networking.
- If you keep this group "open" it can then be used as a warm prospect list for membership.
- Some monitoring of this group is needed, but should require minimal time. ■

Virtual Road Show Stop #2:

Unpacking Hybrid Events

March 18, 2021 | 3:00-4:30 pm CT

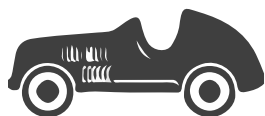
Hybrid events combine in-person elements with the virtual environment. It may sound simple enough, but the reality is that there is no set rule for what a hybrid format should be. While a hybrid event has advantages, like potentially reaching a larger audience, it also has its own set of challenges to consider, such as the fact that virtual attendees' needs and expectations differ from those attending in-person. You may be wondering:

- Is it possible to create a shared experience for your virtual and face-to-face audiences?
- How long should the event be?
- Do both virtual and in-person activities have to be offered simultaneously?
- What are the costs to consider - and should you charge attendees?
- How can you:
 - Adapt your content to the digital environment?
 - Keep your dual audiences engaged?
 - Provide value to sponsors or exhibitors?
 - Train your speakers and attendees?
 - Manage costs associated with technology needs?
 - Manage costs of in-person F&B?



All these questions and more will be explored during this robust panel discussion moderated by **Megan Denhardt, CAE, DES**, President of Denhardt Productions. Submit your burning questions ahead of time and come ready to contribute to this informative dialogue.

This virtual event will consist of a one-hour panel discussion, followed by 30 minutes for networking. ■



Sharing the Knowledge with Dr. Shilagh Mirgain Post-COVID: How to leave your house and join others

Thursday, April 8, 2021 | 11:30 am - 1:15 pm



Join WSAE, Breast Cancer Recovery, and others, including Gilda's Club, in this free, virtual event. If you've been dealing with increased anxiety when leaving the house, there are a number of steps you can take to deal with those feelings, including limiting the amount of coronavirus news you're consuming and by focusing on the simple pleasures in life. Dr. Mirgain will lead a discussion on how to help yourself along with family and friends return to the new "normal."

For more information:
wsae.org > Events > Claendar

Mark your calendars!

Spring Forward

June 7-8, 2021 | Grand Geneva

While we continue to monitor the evolving social climate around COVID-19, we are actively planning for an in-person Spring Forward this June. We hold the health and safety of our members and other event attendees as our top priority.



Why 2021 Is NOT the Year of the Hybrid Conference

by Tracy Grzybowski

Now that I've got your attention, let me clarify. While 2021 may not be the year of the hybrid conference, it should be the year of a year-round hybrid event strategy.

Like so many of you, we've been reading dozens upon dozens of articles, blogs and social media posts from meeting planners, association professionals and event industry leaders, trying to figure out what conferences are going to look like in 2021. When is it safe to plan for an in-person event? How do I address some of the known shortfalls of the virtual format? How do I pull off a hybrid conference with existing resources?

And then, a lightbulb went off for me. *What if we're thinking about our conference all wrong?*

What if, instead of worrying about how to deliver a single virtual event or a single hybrid event, we started planning a year-round event strategy that features a mix of virtual and in-person events, each with their own purpose, but together, delivering more value for our members and sponsors than we could ever do with a single event? Would we finally stop driving ourselves crazy trying to solve a nearly impossible equation?

Virtual and in-person events: not a 1:1 equivalent

We saw some significant virtual event success stories last year. At first, we considered it a win just to hold the event in any form rather than cancel. Soon, stories emerged of associations who not only continued with their events, but were able to significantly increase attendance, revenue and ROI.

However, this group, according to Event MB's *Virtual Event Tech Guide*, appears to be in the minority. According to the report, 71% of respondents who went virtual brought in 25% or less of their typical annual revenue from the conference. 45% saw a decrease in attendance. And 50% stated that their biggest frustration with a virtual event is the inability to match the engagement found at a live event.

PERHAPS AN IN-PERSON ANNUAL MEETING IS USED TO INTRODUCE TOPICS AND CONCEPTS AND FORM AFFINITY GROUPS AMONG YOUR ATTENDEES. SUBSEQUENT VIRTUAL MEETINGS COULD DIVE DEEPER INTO A SPECIFIC SUB-TOPIC, REINFORCE LEARNING FROM THE IN-PERSON EVENT AND FACILITATE DISCUSSION GROUPS FOR ATTENDEES TO SHARE HOW THEY ARE PUTTING THIS LEARNING INTO PRACTICE.

Why is this the case? It's not because of technology. *It's because of the fundamental nature of in-person conferences.*

When we attend an in-person conference, we are all seated together in the same room which means that inherently, we share one common experience.

When you have hundreds, or even thousands, of people logging into a meeting from their own unique environment, that feeling of shared experience is automatically diminished.

In-person events also provide spontaneous moments that can't be anticipated, planned or scheduled. Think of the delightfully random conversations with colleagues at the coffee bar, or a friendly follow-up debate with a speaker over cocktails. A virtual meeting, by its very nature, is more regimented. One-on-one conversations happen less organically, if at all. Social cues are removed from the equation. And any audio/video delays make interactions feel more awkward and stilted.

There are probably hundreds of event tech providers that support some aspect of a virtual event. Heck, so do we. And while our virtual event platform is designed to make it easier to deliver on-demand and live-streamed session content to a virtual audience, it, like most others out there, can't replicate the human moments of a conference.

So why do we keep trying to make the virtual event be something it can't? Instead, should we just embrace what the virtual event *can* do for us?

Where virtual events perform well

Virtual events certainly have their place, and in some categories, outperform in-person conferences. By removing the need to travel (and the associated expense and time away from home and office), we remove one potential attendance barrier, which can open the conference up to a much wider audience.

In general, virtual events are also less expensive to produce, which creates an opportunity to lower the price point, making it even more accessible to more attendees.

And, by offering sessions on-demand during or after the conference, attendees have access to significantly more content than they do on-site, where they are forced to choose between concurrent live sessions.

Hybrid events: The next stressor

Looking ahead to 2021, the industry is focused on the possibility of delivering more hybrid events, which would deliver session content, networking opportunities and sponsor and exhibitor exposure to both in-person attendees and a virtual audience simultaneously.

The rationale for a hybrid event is that it gets us meeting face-to-face again, something most of us are eager to do as soon as it's feasible, while complying with capacity restrictions and social distancing requirements. At the same time, you also open your meeting to a potentially wider virtual audience.

There's just one problem. Most of us don't yet fully understand how to go hybrid – especially with existing resources.

To do hybrid well, you are essentially *creating two versions of the same event*, making new demands on staffing, scheduling, pricing, tradeshow and attendee engagement.

Mind shift: From single event to year-round event strategy

With either scenario, it almost feels like we're trying to deliver ten pounds of conference in a five-ounce box. That's because we're trying to solve for everything – and putting the entire weight of success on one, single event. But what if we changed the end game?

Instead of trying to deliver a single event experience, why not embrace the strengths of each format and give each its own purpose that together delivers an exceptional educational experience? This more holistic approach can reduce strain on your resources while increasing the value for (and revenue from) attendees, members and sponsors.

What does this look like in practice? There are so many ways this could play out for your organization, and the opportunities to get creative are endless.

We were inspired by an idea from event industry veteran Adrian Seger, outlining the use of short, regular and focused online meetings to support *communities of practice*. Using this model, perhaps an in-person annual meeting (or a series of smaller regional meetings in the short-term) is used to introduce topics and concepts and form affinity groups among your attendees. Subsequent virtual meetings could dive deeper into a specific sub-topic, reinforce learning from the in-person event and facilitate discussion groups for attendees to share how they are putting this learning into practice.



Meanwhile, session content from either your in-person or virtual events can be made available on-demand for a fee or for free, depending upon membership status, and packaged with other topic-related resources – courses, articles, whitepapers, etc. This not only creates greater value, but it also promotes other potential revenue sources to your attendees and members.

This series of inter-related in-person and virtual events also provide more exposure opportunities for your sponsors, including:

- More instances for in-session or in-platform recognition
- Serving as a session or group facilitator
- Developing and delivering some of your live or on-demand content

Giving new meaning to the idea that virtual events are (likely) here to stay

If we agree that virtual is here to stay, then it becomes more important to understand how virtual delivery of event content can become part of a larger, year-round strategy that is (eventually) integrated with in-person events. By taking this approach, instead of letting it all ride on one single conference, you give yourself more flexibility, more room for creativity and more ways to deliver valuable education without adding staff or taking on what appears to be a nearly impossible task for many of us. ■



Tracy Grzybowski is Director of Marketing at Omnipress. Omnipress is an organizational member of WSAE. Visit their website: omnipress.com

Looking Forward™ 2021

Industry survey results

by Dean West

This is the 10th annual edition of Looking Forward™, the leading environmental scan of the association strategy environment. Last year at this time, we could not imagine the changes that would rock our professional, personal, and family lives. The COVID-19 pandemic and the events surrounding the summer’s social unrest and the election were stark reminders that we cannot take the personal and business assumptions driving our lives and strategy for granted. Looking backward, trying what used to work again and again, what we’ve always done, is not going to help us adapt to times that are clearly changing.

During 2020, the association sector experienced a wave of self-reflection without equal in modern times. What is our responsibility as organizations to our members, suppliers and communities? What role can we take to help people through difficult times and guide them to resources designed to help them prosper moving forward? While these times may have tested us, they have not bested us.

Economic Circumstances

In 2014, Association Laboratory’s sector research on behalf of the ASAE Foundation identified the link between the economic circumstances facing members and member organizations and their likelihood of engagement with the association.

ACCORDING TO MARKETING GENERAL INC.’S FALL 2020 ASSOCIATION ECONOMIC OUTLOOK REPORT, “69% OF ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVES SAY THEY HAVE SEEN AN INCREASE IN MEMBER ENGAGEMENT SINCE THE RECESSION AND PANDEMIC BEGAN.”

Historically, the more economic hardship faced by association members, the less likely they were to engage with an association.

In Looking Forward™ 2021, we asked respondents to identify the anticipated economic circumstances

of their members. 42% of associations anticipate their members facing a more challenging economic climate, compared to 23% who anticipate a more positive climate. This creates economic pressure on membership dues, travel and the availability of time to participate in or volunteer for association activities.

The economic disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic may have created a different response to economic disruption than history would suggest, though. According to Marketing General Inc.’s Fall 2020 Association Economic Outlook Report, “69% of association executives say they have seen an increase in member engagement since the recession and pandemic began.”

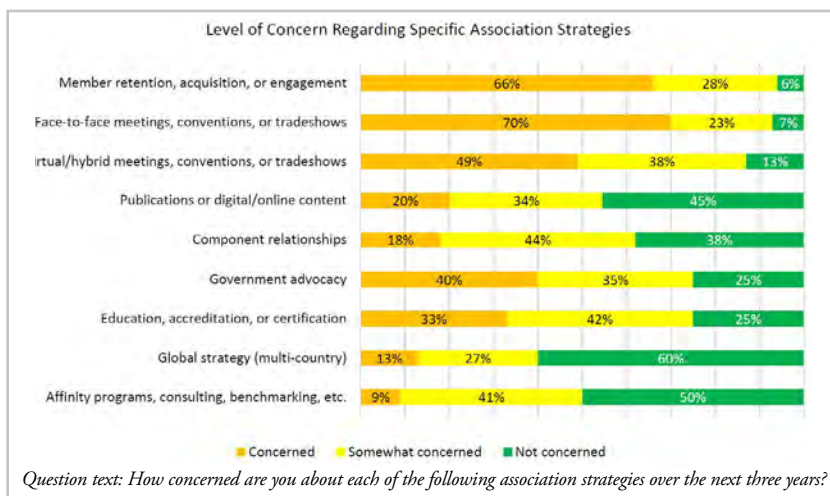
The lesson? Our historical assumptions about the relationship between members and the association may no longer be valid. It will be critical for leaders to assess the future economic climate facing their members and understand the implications, challenges and opportunities this climate presents to the association.

Challenges Facing Association Strategies

Looking Forward™ 2021 assessed 76 challenges across nine association strategy domains. Within these strategies, participants identified the most significant challenges to each strategy’s success. Let’s take a closer look at just a couple of these.

Face-to-Face Meetings Strategy. This has been an unprecedented year for face-to-face meetings strategy. The following are the primary anticipated challenges to this strategy in percentage of respondents selecting each option:

- Audience fear or resistance to travel (68%)
- Employer travel restrictions (67%)
- Creating effective hybrid events (39%)
- Implementing onsite safety protocols (27%)



- Creating a compelling attendee experience (24%)
- Creating safer, more diverse, or inclusive onsite experiences (21%)

Virtual/Hybrid Meetings Strategy. Many associations adjusted their strategy to offer a virtual meeting offer to members and stakeholders. The following are the primary anticipated challenges to this strategy:

- Creating a compelling attendee experience (55%)
- Creating a compelling sponsorship experience (49%)
- Transitioning from face-to-face to virtual experience (29%)
- Audience resistance to online or virtual interaction (27%)
- Creating effective hybrid events (25%)
- Pricing registration (21%)

Membership Strategy. Membership is a foundational strategy essential to the success of most associations. The following are the primary anticipated challenges to this strategy:

- Creating positive awareness of our association with nonmembers (49%)
- Creating more in-depth community engagement (47%)
- Creating more engaging digital or online member relationships (41%)

- Identifying the most relevant membership benefits (38%)
- Customizing the price/benefits of the membership model (34%)
- Identifying non-member engagement paths (i.e. subscription) (28%)
- Identifying or understanding member or non-member audiences (25%)

I hope you will use the information from Looking Forward™ contained in the executive summary and in the customizable dataset located on the Looking Forward Dashboard™, both of which can be accessed through the WSAE website, to inform the decisions that are critical to the success of your association. ■



Dean West, FASAE, is President and Founder of Association Laboratory, a WSAE partner. Find out more about the strategic resources available to you using your WSAE discount at wsae.org > Resources > Research & Strategy, or visit their website: www.associationlaboratory.com.

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Member Engagement with Purpose

No fancy technology required

by Tom Morrison



Membership Engagement: Two words many have tried to define and measure effectively. I've seen many definitions and attempts at using technology to measure it, and believe we are over complicating the key elements and purpose of measuring engagement.

If you add up all the expenses that some are investing – the technology to measure it, the people to monitor it and the on-going maintenance – I wonder if the investment even makes sense. Is there a more cost-effective means? I think so, especially if you are a small- to medium-sized association. I feel that we are too caught up in the process, and not focused enough on the purpose of measuring member engagement.

I believe that the number one reason for measuring member engagement should be to understand the level of engagement by members. This is done so that we can categorize them, develop targeted messaging, reward active

engagement and encourage those not actively engaged. With *lack of member engagement* year-in and year-out being the primary reason members don't renew their memberships, it is critical to figure this out. Maximizing membership engagement solves everything in an association. Here's how we do it at ours.

Our association has made member engagement our top priority over the last 10 years, and it's why we have:

- 97% member retention (industry average 80%)
- 81% of members engaged in at least one program (industry average 64%)
- Over 1,300% growth in net reserves over that time

I share these numbers to illustrate the potential impact of making member engagement a priority, defining your touch points (value proposition), measuring effectively (data collection), and then *acting* on the data.

I'm here to tell you that with an effective AMS and an Excel spreadsheet, anyone can measure member engagement. It's all about connecting members to your value

proposition, and defining and measuring engagement down to the member results in *analysis paralysis*. And it is very expensive. It doesn't mean that it isn't valuable and that you shouldn't do it, it's just expensive. Our engagement data strategy

is simple and garners high rewards, as our key performance metrics mentioned above illustrate.

The process I go through every four to six months takes about three hours, and at the end of it, I know exactly which member engagement category and which engagement level every member falls into from reviewing my resultant Excel spreadsheet.

We track everything in our AMS that our members can participate in, volunteer for and attend. Once per quarter, I download member participation data. I break our member touch points into three categories:

1. Informational Members (members who access any products that we provide for free)

WITH LACK OF MEMBER ENGAGEMENT YEAR-IN AND YEAR-OUT BEING THE PRIMARY REASON MEMBERS DON'T RENEW THEIR MEMBERSHIPS, IT IS CRITICAL TO FIGURE THIS OUT.

2. Transactional Members (members who actually spend money to purchase anything; excluding meetings)
3. Emotional Members (members who attend meetings or volunteer)

Here's a full listing of our touch points in each category:

Informational Members:

- Annual wage and benefit study
- Semi-annual ops cost program
- Monthly sales and forecasting program
- Nadcap audit database

Transactional Members:

- Metal Treating Institute (MTI) online academy
- Ad purchases in quarterly magazine
- Sentry business insurance program
- APPI energy program
- Purchased training/publications

Emotional Members:

- Attend national meetings
- Attend regional meetings
- Enrolled executive in YES management training program
- Board member or volunteer in any capacity

We give each member one point for each of the touch points participated in. We do not give any higher weight to any category. Many like to give higher weighting to certain activities. We don't believe that a board member who is involved in two programs should be considered more active than a member involved in six programs, but doesn't volunteer. We too easily fall prey to believing that if you are *seen* in the association at meetings or volunteering, then you must be *highly engaged*, and this is simply not true. I find that most board members are fairly engaged, but there are also non-volunteers who are more engaged on an on-going basis.

Once we have all the points assigned for all touch points, we then sort the members from highest point total to lowest point total. With 13 key touch points of engagement, we draw the following lines:

- Highly engaged members - Five or more points
- Actively engaged members - Two to four points
- Engaged members - One point
- Not engaged - Zero points

Having the spreadsheet further allows us to look at the percent of engagement in each program and determine what percent of members fall into our three categories of engagement, in addition to the individual level of engagement.

With emails included in the download to this spreadsheet, we can then send out specific messaging to members in each of the levels of engagement through our email marketing system. We typically send Thank You notes to those who are highly engaged, and promotions to those who are lesser engaged.

I don't believe in getting caught up in the time or expense of technology for engagement, because no one system will ever meet all association needs. At least, I have yet to see one. I try to never say never with regard to technology, but I need something that can work for me now, and is simple to use and interpret. My way is cost-free and only takes about three hours each time I do it.

Managing this process once every four to six months allows me to know exactly what our membership engagement looks like. We can then take appropriate messaging and marketing steps to move members from *not actively engaged* to *actively engaged*.

The last comment I will make is that you will notice we don't make online community networking a part of our engagement touch points. This is because, like the newsletter, it represents a value and communication media available to everyone, but is not what drives the association or the member. When someone makes a post in an online community, they come and go, and often forget about the post a week later. Our physical programs (although most associations have had to modify program format for now, during the pandemic) have historically generated the highest level of value because they are focused on maximizing the member's productivity and profits, so they can enjoy a thriving business for their families and employees.

Remember, I don't do this with any futuristic, high-tech program. It is a download from our AMS (Abila Netforum), an Excel file and about three hours of my time. Anyone can do this. And you should take the time to do it – your member engagement will really take off. ■



Tom Morrison is CEO of Metal Treating Institute (MTI), an author and a nationally sought-after speaker. For more info about Tom, visit www.tommorrison.biz. He can conduct a membership engagement strategy session with your association. Contact him at tom@tommorrison.biz.

Get Innovative Amid a Pandemic to Grow Membership and Revenues

by Daniel Steininger, JD

The lifeblood of any association is the ability for members to meet at your events, network and expand relationships. It's also a great way to invite and attract new members, and generate revenue for the organization.

The current pandemic has disrupted every association that has relied on the traditional model for member connection, growth and financial viability.

This is a major problem and it challenges us all. I call such problems and challenges *Mountains*. We face them almost every day both in our personal lives and in our organizations.

Choosing the best way to navigate the mountains can be done through the creative process, using innovative tools.

LAST MARCH, BEFORE MOST DOCTORS UNDERSTOOD COVID-19, I ENDED UP IN THE HOSPITAL. THE TERRIFYING PART WAS THAT MOST DOCTORS DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO TREAT IT. I UTILIZED EVERYTHING I KNEW ABOUT THE CREATIVE PROCESS TO HELP SAVE MY LIFE.

Last March, before most doctors understood COVID-19, I ended up in the hospital with it. The terrifying part was that most doctors didn't know how to treat it. I utilized everything I knew about the creative process to help save my life.

I had my laptop, so I got busy on the Internet, created daily questions for my doctors and started implementing some changes that helped me recover in the hospital. I learned to refuse a ventilator because the results were not very promising. And I could list another 20 things I did to help secure my survival.

It's no different with an organization or business. The pandemic has impacted every one of them, and if it wasn't this pandemic, some other crisis would present itself.

I can't tell you what to do to drive new revenues or retain customers as this pandemic continues to unfold. But I can recommend a process to follow in thinking it through for yourself. And, whether it applies to you personally or to your organization, it will create some viable options that you can pursue.

Define the problem

You must take the time to understand what it is you're trying to solve. A good technique would be to ask the question "Why?" five different times to get to the root causes behind your immediate crisis.

We tend to try to jump to solutions immediately, but that does not create an effective game plan for solving a crisis. Being patient and exploring the real causes behind the problem will reveal better ways to solve them.

List in order of priority the causes of the problem

It's not scientific, but it will help you understand what you need to attack first. This is the way most doctors treat illness or injury. They take the time to take your vitals and determine whether or not there's a deeper underlying problem.



Address the number one cause of the problem you're facing

If your car doesn't start, you would first identify possible causes, including checking the battery, verifying gas level, even checking for use of the appropriate key, until you identify the number one cause. That's the one you want to attack.

Begin the process of ideation

A Harvard Business School study found that the more ideas you put in play, the better the results will be at the end. Don't stop at 10 or 20 – keep going until you have a long list and keep returning to it to expand it. I probably had 30 different ideas in the hospital to help resolve COVID-19 for myself.

You can tap multiple sources for ideas such as using Google, studying the competition or reading relevant articles and publications that help expand your horizon for new ideas.

Create a matrix to judge the ideas you have created

Your matrix should list all of the attributes you want to use in evaluating your ideas, such as cost, time, resources, and speed of implementation. Assign a numerical score to each attribute for each idea. Once you complete the evaluation, compare the total scores for each idea. The ideas with the highest score totals emerge as the potential solutions to your problem. Again, it's not scientific, but this points you in a good direction.

Test your ideas

Test, as simply and inexpensively as possible, the ideas you come up with to see what would resolve the problem quickly. Inventive entrepreneurs build prototypes rather than go through the expensive process of building a completed ready-to-function product or service. You can do the same. I actually tested several different kinds of medications and other ideas that I thought would help resolve my medical crisis. I even recommended some to the hospital staff that worked well for me!

Implement your ideas and watch the results

If successful, accelerate the implementation of that solution and then focus on others that emerge high on your list. ■



Dan Steininger, JD, is author of *Moving Mountains Every Day* and also writes a column called *Innovate or Die* for the *Biz Times*. He is president of Steininger & Associates LLC; and is president and founder of BizStarts, assisting entrepreneurs start new businesses. He is a WSAE member, sitting on WSAE's Revenue Streams Task Force. Dan can be reached at dsteinin@execpc.com.



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Elkhart Lake, WI

Chair's message, continued from page 2.

also look forward to hosting our smaller events in 2021, including the Meeting Planner Exchange and the Executive Exchange. Both were held in person this past year and both received rave reviews. It's amazing how much energy we derive from each other. I don't think any of us will ever take face-to-face interaction for granted ever again.

Another of my favorite initiatives is the CEO Roundtables. What started out as in-person CEO breakfasts, lunches and happy hours in Madison and Milwaukee have now taken on the form of a monthly statewide (virtual) morning CEO Café. I'm pleased to say that we've seen ever-increasing attendance and support. While we may start out with light-hearted conversation, such as comparing what type of coffee concoction we happen to be drinking, or naming a favorite drink at our local coffee shop drive-thru, the group always ends up sharing valuable, poignant and oftentimes confidential information that can only be shared in a safe environment where you feel free to share whatever happens to be of utmost

concern at the moment (and trust me, the list has been *long* over the past year). No one understands our association management responsibilities, including the concerns and the joys, better than we do. I feel confident saying that ultimately our own teams benefit from the information shared.

I'm pleased to report that WSAE is currently looking to expand this concept to other facets of our membership, as well. Again, stay tuned.

Last, but certainly not least, I can't stress enough that your WSAE Board wants to hear from you!

That means *all* of you – not just CEOs, but all members of your respective association teams, and of course, our tremendously valued industry partners. What are *you* looking for? How can your WSAE help you most right now?

We've never needed each other more than we do right now. I strongly encourage you to get involved in your WSAE. We really are stronger together! ■



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Can You Require Employees to Get the COVID-19 Vaccine?

"Ask the Expert" legal feature

by Ann Barry Hanneman

Q: *Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the availability of a vaccine, can I require all my employees to get the vaccine before returning to work? Do I have to make any exceptions? What can I do if an employee refuses to comply with this mandate?*

A: With the recent rollout of the first COVID-19 vaccines, employers are naturally considering requiring all employees to have the vaccine before returning to work. On December 16, 2020, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued updates to its COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions guidance (FAQs) addressing issues that may create legal liability when mandating employees get the COVID-19 vaccine. I will first address the potential legal issues implicated in a mandatory vaccine policy and then address some business considerations you may want to consider before implementing any mandatory vaccine policy.

Mandatory COVID-19 vaccine policy requirements

In its FAQ guidance, the EEOC confirms that employers may maintain COVID-19 vaccination policies as a safety-based qualification standard. However, as with any mandatory vaccination program, an employer must follow nondiscrimination laws that allow for legally required disability or religious accommodations. Further, employers must be aware of other laws that may be implicated in the process, such as assuring that pre-screening vaccination inquiries do not inadvertently ask for prohibited genetic information, such as employees' or their family members' medical histories, that may violate the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA).

Required exclusions when implementing

As stated above, although employers can mandate all employees receive a COVID-19 vaccine, the implementation of any mandatory policy must include an allowance for reason-

IF PROOF OF THE VACCINATION IS REQUIRED, MAKE SURE EMPLOYEES ARE SPECIFICALLY NOTIFIED THEY SHOULD NOT PROVIDE ANY MEDICAL INFORMATION, INCLUDING GENETIC INFORMATION, SUCH AS FAMILY MEDICAL HISTORY.

able accommodations for employees with disabilities that prevent them from receiving the vaccine consistent with the ADA. In addition, the implementation of any mandatory vaccine policy must also provide for reasonable accommodations for employees unable to receive the vaccine

due to a sincerely held religious belief, practice or observance as required under Title VII. For further discussion as to these prohibitions under the federal laws enforced by the EEOC, please see Section K at: <https://bit.ly/3jAToq5>.

When implementing a mandatory vaccination policy, bear in mind that other federal, state and local laws may require further compliance obligations, as laws addressing COVID-19 are being considered across the nation. Additionally, employers with a unionized workforce subject to a collective bargaining agreement must also consider whether a mandatory vaccination policy can be implemented without first negotiating with the union, a subject that needs to be addressed prior to unilateral implementation.



Business considerations and practice tips

When implementing a mandatory vaccination policy, consider the following:

Clearly communicate the scope of any mandatory vaccination policy and the expectations to employees. If proof of the vaccination is required, make sure employees are specifically notified they should not provide any medical information, including genetic information, such as family medical history.

Ensure employees are aware of how to request a reasonable accommodation for a disability or sincerely held religious belief, practice or observance and provide training to those handling such requests. Note that:

- Under the ADA, employers must be careful to ensure that any vaccination requirements do not screen out, or tend to screen out, individuals with a disability and must engage in the interactive process to identify a possible workplace accommodation that does not create an undue hardship for the employer or that fails to mitigate a direct threat in the workplace. For example, working remotely and/or leave may be a reasonable accommodation that could be provided, depending on the circumstances.
- Under Title VII, employers must offer reasonable accommodations to employees unable to receive the vaccine due to a sincerely held religious belief, practice or observance. When administering, employers should assume requests for religious accommodations are sincere. If an objective basis exists to doubt the sincerity of the request, only then may an employer request supporting information. A showing of *undue hardship* has to be made if an employer is unable to provide a reasonable accommodation under Title VII.

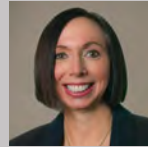
Train supervisors and managers on how to identify and address requests for a reasonable accommodation, particularly potential disability and religious accommodation requests that may be made. As with any accommodation request, the employer should identify when Human Resources should be involved. Make sure the right people are responding to these requests.

If an employee refuses to comply with a mandatory vaccination policy, ensure all reasonable accommodation possibilities have been exhausted and conduct an individualized direct threat analysis to support a finding that the employee's presence would expose others to the virus at the worksite. This direct threat analysis must consider the following: 1) the duration of the risk; 2) the nature and severity of the potential harm; 3) the likeli-

hood the potential harm will occur; and 4) the imminence of potential harm. In addition, consider any other federal, state or local laws that may apply before terminating an employee for failing to comply with the mandatory vaccination policy.

I hope this provides you with general legal and practical considerations needed when assessing the implementation of mandatory vaccine policy under your particular circumstances. ■

Do you have a legal question for our regular "Ask the Expert" column? Please e-mail mczosek@wsae.org for consideration. Information provided in response to this Ask the Expert question does not constitute legal advice and is intended only to provide general information to assist WSAE members.



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How to Create Sustainable Success in Your Life

by Paula Houlihan, CIC

For many of us, 2020 started out as the year to create a clear vision for success. Someone came up with a catchy play on words about 20/20 vision and we ran with it... until the pandemic hit, and the world came to a screeching halt.

Our focus quickly shifted to survival.

COVID-19 presented a threat to our lives. Other events raised awareness of systemic racism and exclusion, alerting us to the need for diversity and inclusion.

And while we were excited to put the year behind us, 2020 made us rethink how we do things. It gave us an opportunity to take another look at our priorities and redefine what success means to us.

Redefining success

For many, success is defined by what you achieve: The amount of money you earn; the things you own; the experiences and opportunities it affords you. For others, success is a sense of accomplishment from winning, reaching a goal or learning a new skill.

These definitions naturally point us in the direction of work as the means to achieve success. Unfortunately, this perspective leaves out other important areas of life – our relationships, health and wellbeing.

Merriam Webster defines success as a *degree or measure of succeeding; favorable or desired outcome; also the attainment of wealth, favor, or eminence.*

In short, success is subjective. And it's personal. However you define it, though, one thing we all have in common when it comes to the notion of success is we all believe achieving it will make us happy.

An outdated success model

There's an outdated success model that tells us we need to work hard now so we can enjoy life later. It's fueled by our innate desire for security and happiness, which many



SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS IS ABOUT HAVING TIME AND ENERGY FOR YOUR RELATIONSHIPS AND WHAT YOU LOVE TO DO WHILE ALSO CREATING SUCCESS IN BUSINESS IN A WAY THAT FEELS FULFILLING AND SATISFYING. IT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRYING TO FIND THE TIME TO ENJOY YOUR LIFE VERSUS BUILDING YOUR LIFE AROUND WHAT YOU LOVE.

believe is achieved by having more money.

Our desire for achievement is driven by a belief that we cannot feel safe until we reach a certain level of success. This makes us more willing to put off enjoying our life until the promise of *someday*, when the hard work will pay off.

The problem is, the pursuit of the proverbial carrot is not sustainable. It's exhausting, leaving us feeling overstressed, overworked and overwhelmed, affecting our health and relationships. The sad thing is, so many find that once they have achieved their idea of success, it didn't provide the sense of security, happiness or satisfaction they thought it would bring them.

This is not surprising, since this approach, at best, ignores the other areas of our life – our relationships, health and wellbeing – and, at worst, requires us to sacrifice them, in some cases permanently. So where does that leave you?

Putting *you* into the success equation

What started as the year of clear vision for our success quickly shifted to a focus on our health, safety and survival.

It's hard to think about success when you're focused on survival. We forget to ask ourselves what makes us happy because we tend to think about happiness after we feel safe. The problem with this approach is our happiness becomes reactive and conditioned to circumstances that are outside of our control.

The one thing we do have control over is our power of choice: how we choose to respond to the circumstances around us and how we choose to use our time. Choice puts *you* into the success equation.

Creating sustainable success

The missing component in the old success model is the key to creating sustainable success: knowing what's important to you, what makes you happy, and then building your life around *that*, independent of what is happening in the world around you.

2020 forced us to look at how we use our time. New roles and responsibilities were added to our already busy schedules. Daily routines were thrown out the window, forcing us to learn how to do things differently. As we faced new demands on our time, we quickly realized we could no longer do things as they had always been done. We had to make new choices.

And with new choices come new perspectives.

Through the process of adjusting, we discovered what is truly important to us: relationships, community and connection. There's no shame in wanting business success and wanting a successful personal life too. The thing is, many people seem to struggle with what they want in their personal life and the success they desire, as if they have to choose between the two. You don't. *Because sustainable success isn't something you achieve, it's a lifestyle.*

Sustainable success is about having time and energy for your relationships and what you love to do while also creating success in business in a way that feels fulfilling and satisfying. It's the difference between trying to find the time to enjoy your life versus building your life around what you love.

Success on your terms

I've developed a five-step process to help you create sustainable success on your terms. I call it my STARR system.

S: Your success compass

Get clear about what's important to you, your strengths and core values. Use these as your compass to help define what success means to you.

T: Know your terms

These are your non-negotiables. The foundation that sup-

ports your success and determines what is and is not aligned with the lifestyle you want to live.

When considering your terms, think about the different areas of your life and ask yourself these four questions:

- What am I wanting?
- What am I willing to work for?
- What am I willing to stop doing?
- What am I willing to do instead?

Once you are clear on your terms – your non-negotiables – you need to take aligned action.

A: Aligned action

Aligned action is different than taking action for the sake of action. It's what separates the busy from the productive. This is where you take back your time.

Instead of doing all the things you think you should do, this step is about taking action that achieves success as *you* define it, aligned with what you want in business and in life. Moving into action without proper clarity around it, is what pulls you in too many directions, let's other people's emergencies steal your time and leads to burnout.

Once you are clear on your terms and have set a path to achieve success as you define it, you can recharge and realize results.

R: Recharge

You have to be able to recharge or you risk stressing out. This is where you connect with your passion, or perhaps find it for the first time.

This step helps you avoid burnout. When your actions are fueled by your passion and values they recharge and fulfill you, which boosts your energy and helps you do more in less time.

R: Results

Not just random results but the results you *want* for your business and for your life. This is where the magic happens. When your pursuit of success is aligned with what is truly important to you, no aspect of your life is left behind.

Through the power of choice, you can achieve sustainable success, which, by definition, lasts a lifetime. Let 2021 be the year you create a clear vision to navigate success – on your terms. ■



Paula Houlihan, CIC, is a presenter and Signature Success Strategist who helps you enjoy success in business and in life. Founder of Paula Houlihan International LLC (www.PaulaHoulihan.com) she teaches how to navigate success on your terms through the power of choice. Reach her at Paula@PaulaHoulihan.com. Paula is a WSAE member.



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Understanding History for Purpose

Having the hard conversations can lead to stronger organizational culture

by Gus Martinez

December 15, 2003, is an important date for me because it marked my entry into the hospitality and tourism industry as I began working the front desk at the Peninsula Chicago. For those who had similar starts, you understand the value of that experi-

TARGETED SURVEYS (COMPARED TO SURVEYS OF THE WHOLE COMPANY) ARE KEY WHEN ATTEMPTING TO DISCOVER YOUR ORGANIZATION'S BLIND SPOTS. WHY? BECAUSE IF YOU WANT TO KNOW IF JURASSIC PARK IS SAFE, YOU DON'T ASK THE DINOSAURS.

ence. I worked at other luxury hotels in downtown Chicago and eventually this path led me to working for two Convention & Visitors Bureaus (CVBs). Almost two decades later, I look back at my career with a lot of pride and happiness. Many contracts were signed and much business won.

I attended numerous educational and entertaining conferences, and I made long-lasting friendships. However, I cannot ignore the huge elephant in this industry's room – we have an equity problem. There are patterns and biases that are negatively impacting people of color and minorities. It is time we talk about them.

The ugly truth

This realization has led me to my current career chapter, as it is another passion of mine – leading and advancing equity conversations as a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) consultant. Too often, I hear people talking about allyship and saying, *diversity is good for business*. Now, I am not saying they are incorrect, nor am I minimizing the importance of these components as part of this big and complex puzzle. The problem, however, is that people gloss over the importance of history and fail to connect the dots. We choose to look away from the ugly truth of slavery. When discussing oppression, racism and inequality, slavery is page one of chapter one. The principles of *dominate culture* and dividing people based on the color of their skin was created during slavery. Black history is American history. Below are examples of how the United States government created inequity using the legal system.

The *13th Amendment* abolished slavery. Those in power purposely added a loophole that hindered African Americans: *Except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States*. In summary, if a Black American was convicted of a crime, they were stripped of their rights and freedoms. What were some of these crimes in the late 1800s? It was a crime if



blacks walked beside a railroad track. It was a crime if blacks spoke loudly in a crowd of white people. And it was a crime if blacks sold products from their own farm at nighttime.

Jim Crow Laws were quickly formed after slavery was abolished. The landmark case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 established *Separate but Equal* through the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to uphold the constitutionality of racial segregation.

We dismiss how recently these events occurred. It wasn't until 1964 when the *Civil Right Act* of 1964 prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion and sex. We either are or know someone in their 60s (or older) who experienced this era and its hardship firsthand. Personally, I feel 60 years is not enough time to repair centuries worth of errors.

In fact, the *War on Drugs* in the 1980s targeted black and brown communities for minor drug offenses, filling prisons with people of color – yet another example of the government legalizing discrimination. This tactic still has major repercussion illuminated by the massive discrepancy in the number of those imprisoned. In 2021, there are 2.3 million people in prison, one out of five of them are incarcerated for drug offenses. A deeper examination reveals Black and Hispanic people make up 65% of those in prison, yet are only 30% of the U.S. population.

When people talk about *the system* and the topic of systemic racism, these are some of the referenced examples. They are not isolated incidents nor coincidences.

A lack of representation

The statement *there is power in numbers* could not be more accurate. I argue that people of color and minorities are sorely lacking representation in senior leadership roles throughout corporate America, and the hospitality and tourism industry is no different. Last July, the magazine *Black Meetings & Tourism* shared that, of the approximately 500 CVBs throughout the United States, they could only identify 12 African Americans holding positions of President/CEO. *Harvard Business Review*, in 2019, found 69% of professional speakers at conferences were male – a phenomenon dubbed *manel*. It also found little attention was given to racial diversity in these events. It is hard to influence change if you are not given a voice or platform.

The current U.S. population is the most diverse it has ever been – 60% white v. 40% diverse/multicultural. This statistic has been referenced a lot as an accomplishment, but really, what has changed? Of the *Fortune 500* CEOs, minorities make up less than 5%. Congress is 82% White. Mayors in this country are 88% White. Would you be

shocked if I told you we have yet to see a black female state governor? Let us reflect for a moment and think to ourselves about what message this is projecting.

Toward stonger organizational culture

An unhealthy work culture will destroy any business strategy. Unconscious bias is a big factor that impacts culture negatively and erodes a work environment. Through this human behavior (that we all have) we tend to categorize people based on media, outside influence and stereotypes. Because people of color are not often in leadership, these biases can go unaddressed at the highest levels. This puts minorities at a disadvantage, as they are told they are not ready or not the right fit when seeking promotions. When leadership is not diverse, it tends to promote and sponsor people that look, act and have similar backgrounds as themselves, thus perpetuating the status quo. Could this be the reason that hotel general managers, executive directors at associations, VPs and CEOs appear so homogeneous? The deeper impact over time is that employees see this unfairness and become disengaged and defeated, and feel alienated. Employees eventually leave these organizations. And, if the culture is not corrected, this can lead to high turnover and become very costly. It is important to recognize which voices are not being heard. Look for the *only and lonely*, that lone minority on a team or in a department, and try to understand their perspective. Targeted surveys (compared to surveys of the whole company) are key when attempting to discover your organization's blind spots. Why? Because if you want to know if Jurassic Park is safe, you don't ask the dinosaurs.

Integration is key when committing to D&I. D&I needs to be interwoven with the organization's values, policies and practices. Commitment starts at the top! Department heads can easily define success within their team but struggle when asked, specifically, to define D&I success. The reality is you measure what you treasure. I have been told by executives that they are not ready to tackle diversity in their company because they lack the ability or the resources. Inaction is an action itself, so I pose this question to leaders – How do you build, elevate and celebrate human differences in your organization? I assure you, your employees are watching and taking note. Understand the greatest resource in your company is your people. ■



Gus Martinez is a diversity and inclusion consultant and speaker. Gus is a WSAE member. Visit his website for more information: www.gsmdiversity.com.

Counteracting Unconscious Bias

by Lisa Koenecke



Do you remember your first toy? How about your favorite food growing up? These items and memories are part of our unique story and can form a bias. Not all biases are negative. If you still eat your favorite food – mine is my mom’s homemade spaghetti – this can be comforting. My favorite toy growing up was an Allis Chalmers tractor.

What was your first thought when you read that? *Tractor, I thought your name was Lisa and Lisa is a girl’s name, right? You must have grown up on a farm, because in the city, we didn’t even know what a tractor was unless we went on a field trip to the country.*

Let’s take a quick look at what just happened. Did you think I was Italian because my favorite food was spaghetti? *Hey, Lisa, wait a minute, that’s a stereotype.* Yes, dear reader, you are correct! Not all Italians eat spaghetti and not all people who eat spaghetti are Italian. Next, I talked about my tractor. Perhaps you realize there is a gender bias here. Perhaps you were taught at a young age that boys play with trucks and tractors and girls play with dolls and pink things.

IF YOU THINK THAT ALL ASIANS ARE SMART, OR WHITE MEN CAN’T DANCE, THAT IS A STEREOTYPE. BUT IF YOU HIRE AN ASIAN FOR A JOB THAT ALSO HAS AN EQUALLY QUALIFIED BLACK APPLICANT BECAUSE YOU THINK BLACKS ARE NOT AS SMART AS ASIANS, YOU ARE BIASED.

Another bias that might creep into this discussion is a class bias. *If Lisa grew up on a farm, she was probably poor and not educated.* See what I did there? I am not blaming or shaming you for having these thoughts, I just want you to know that you can counteract these unconscious biases.

At Diffen.com, I typed in *what is the difference between bias and stereotype?* Here is their answer: ***The difference between bias and stereotype is that a bias is a personal preference, like or dislike, especially when the tendency interferes with the ability to be impartial, unprejudiced, or objective. On the other hand, a stereotype is a preconceived idea that attributes certain characteristics (in general) to all the members of class or set.***

If you think that all Asians are smart, or white men can’t dance, that is a stereotype. But if you hire an Asian for a job that also has an equally qualified black applicant because you think blacks are not as smart as Asians, you are biased.

I hope that definition helps.

Think about how we make these conscious or unconscious thoughts every day. I might have one of these thoughts at home which can carry over into my work environment, or I might bring one of these thoughts from work to home. If I don’t filter my thoughts, I might be unintentionally showing my bias to my family.

I grew up on a farm – yes, you did get that one correct. We were taught to work hard. And, we were taught there is a big difference between Lutherans and Catholics. I didn’t even know that my college roommate was Methodist until I asked. In fact, being raised Lutheran, I was forbidden to date a Catholic boy. But they never said anything about

a Catholic girl (insert rim shot sound here). More of that story in another article.

Let's get back to counteracting unconscious bias. This information comes from Cornell University, where I received my Diversity & Inclusion Certification. Counteracting unconscious bias can be done:

1. Check your privilege (yes, we all have some privilege).
2. Hear women, or introverts, or middle children.
3. Officially recognize the marginalized population.
4. Speak up for those without a voice/representation.
5. Invite advocacy.
6. Check your stereotypical roles and assignments.
 - Female=Notetaker
 - Male=Never takes notes
7. Think proactively in micro affirmations (nodding your head, support).
8. Give credit where it is due.
9. Support your minority colleagues.
10. Educate yourself – Don't always ask the underrepresented person to speak for their population.

A great way to educate yourself is to take the free Implicit Association Test (implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/iatdetails.html) from Harvard University. I use this with my graduate students training to become school counselors. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) has 15 different quizzes you take to find out where you stand on certain situations. The IAT measures attitudes and beliefs that people may be unwilling or unable to report: implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html. I recommend taking these yourself before you ask your team or your family to take them. They may not be as fun as a trivia contest for teambuilding, but the IAT is sure to help you and your circle of influence become more inclusive.

Thank you for helping to make this world a better place! ■



Lisa Koenecke offers diversity, equity and inclusion tools, trainings and consultations. Contact her, watch her TEDx Talk or buy her best-selling book: *Be An Inclusion Ally* at www.lisakoenecke.com. Lisa is a WSAE member.

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Congratulations!

Meet the inspirational WSAE 2020 Award Winners

The 2020 award winners were recognized during the Virtual Awards Celebration and Annual Business Meeting.



HALL OF FAME

Christine Pepper, CAE, MBA **National Funeral Director Association**

The Hall of Fame Award goes to individuals who demonstrate involvement and commitment to the association management field on a continuous basis.

Christine has served as CEO of the National Funeral Director Association (NFDA) for over 35 years! More recently, she led the NFDA in carrying out the crucial role of deploying "last responders" to New York and New Jersey during the COVID disaster. Members who volunteer perform a challenging and frightening service to the families and communities that were hardest hit. Her nominator said, "I was so impressed by Christine's leadership and strength. It took long hours on the part of her and her staff to organize the call for volunteers."

Christine is also a past Chair of WSAE's board of directors. ■



VISIONARY

Brandon Scholz **Wisconsin Grocers Association**

WSAE's Visionary Award recognizes members who demonstrate outstanding commitment to their association, profession or the association community's innovation and leadership as evidenced by one or more of the Core Competencies of WSAE.

Brandon has served as the President and CEO for the Wisconsin Grocers Association (WGA) for nearly 25 years. During his tenure, WGA has excelled as a leader in Wisconsin and among other grocer associations across the country. Brandon is a strong leader, and is used as a resource by the media, Legislature, his peers and others in the association world. One of Brandon's nominators has worked with him for over 20 years. She said she feels fortunate every day to be part of his team. And when COVID-19 hit, his visionary leadership rose to meet the occasion.

In March 2020, consumers were hoarding toilet paper and grocery stores were struggling to keep items stocked. Brandon used his connections at the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association to create a #GrocersHereForYou public service campaign with COVID-19 messages for radio and television to 1) provide re-assurance to consumers that there was ample food supply and 2) encourage consumers to only send one person to purchase groceries, and to get what's needed for a full week or two for the entire family. Brandon personally made phone calls to members raising funds for the media campaign. He used his connections to secure Milwaukee Brewers' Craig Counsell and Milwaukee Bucks' Mike Budenholzer to serve as spokespeople in the media spots. We heard back from one member who said he cried when he heard the radio spot because he was so proud to be a grocer.

And again, in April 2020, when Brandon heard from WGA members that masks were hard to find, Brandon took it upon himself to find and supply masks. He ordered 115,000 masks, and found a distributor who would ship them and invoice for the masks, too. ■



VISIONARY

Kristine Hillmer, CAE, MBA
Wisconsin Restaurant Association

Kristine worked tirelessly to support Wisconsin Restaurant Association (WRA) members who were devastated by immediate closings when the COVID-related quarantine first occurred. She lobbied, she used social media and she rallied her staff and volunteer troops to focus on survival for her association and her members. Kristine's nominator was "particularly impressed with her use of technology to help members and to care for member restaurant employees." Her members relied on the WRA website to notify consumers of which restaurants had carryout or curbside service. They also posted job openings in other industries out of concern for the employees who were laid off.

Kristine is also a past Chair of WSAE's board of directors. ■



ASSOCIATION LEADERSHIP

Kirsten Reader
Impact Association Management

The Association Leadership Award recognizes professionals who demonstrate leadership within their association, profession or the association community through one or more of the Values of WSAE.

At Impact, Kirsten took what was already a great environment and made it even better, adding team activities such as happy hours, office games and fitness challenges. This has made a real difference in the team dynamic. In turn, clients took notice, knowing now they can rely on, not only their designated Executive Administrator, but the entire team. Kirsten even combines team activities with client relations. She organized a recent team retreat around the client experience, which included working through different experiences from clients' perspectives to understand how to provide excellent customer service.

Kirsten is always brainstorming ways to give each client what they need even if it doesn't fit into a perfect package. When COVID-19 hit, she was immediately brainstorming ways to ease client stresses with flexible packages, recession plans and membership retention ideas. Her brain never shuts off when it comes to making Impact and the industry better than how she found it.

Kirsten is a leader in the association community, serving on a number of association boards and holding leadership positions. Kirsten serves on the WSAE Education Committee as well as the AMC Institute Director of Operations Cohort. ■



YOUNG PROFESSIONAL

Elizabeth Schlicht, CAE
Association Acumen

The Young Professional Award acknowledges a young professional making a difference with their contributions to WSAE, their association or the association management field.

Elizabeth has been a mover and a shaker in Wisconsin's association management community for nearly seven years. She started in membership and marketing roles, helping to increase the membership ranks of associations she worked with. She is always willing to help or mentor a fellow association manager in need, and she is great at soaking up best practices in the industry. Elizabeth possesses a brilliant blend of both left brain and right brain strengths - she is highly organized and detail-oriented, while also very creative and artistic. This balance served her well as she grew into an executive director role. Her nominator said, "When I was the executive director of the Automotive Fleet & Leasing Association, I'd often tell our board chair that someday Elizabeth would be my boss." Now that she has taken the reigns at that association, I'm certain that she will lead them down a path that advances the corporate fleet industry into the future. ■

Destination Madison announces new President and CEO



Ellie Westman Chin was selected after a nationwide search. She currently works as the President and CEO for Visit Franklin in Tennessee. Destination Madison noted that Westman Chin was named the 2018 Greater Nashville Hospitality Association Woman in Hospitality and Tourism Leader of the Year. Destination Madison Board Chair Greg Frank explained that they wanted

someone who saw Madison as a top travel destination, had industry experience and “got Madison’s vibe.”

Gus Martinez named to MPI's DE&I Committee



Gus Martinez, Diversity Consultant with GSM Diversity, has been named to the Meeting Professionals International (MPI) Diversity Equity & Inclusion Committee for 2021. Gus says, “Being a consultant in this space, it is a mission that I am fully committed to. I am excited to do my part helping shape the organization and industry for a stronger and better tomorrow.”



Kim DiMaggio receives prestigious recognition

Kim DiMaggio was awarded the 2020 NARI of Madison President’s award. This is an award presented by the NARI of Madison president to the person or people who demonstrates dedication to the association and who

helped them the most during their presidency: “Thank you, Kim, for being so conscientious and generous with our chapter. You are smart, dedicated, thorough and thoughtful. You have helped me again and again to make the hard decisions, and I hope you know how much we value and appreciate you.” The award was presented on November 5, 2020.

Toni Herkert joins League of Wisconsin Municipalities staff



The League of Wisconsin Municipalities is pleased to announce that Toni Herkert has joined their staff as the League’s new Government Affairs Director. Toni will work closely with Curt Witynski, the League’s Deputy Director, to advance city and village legislative goals in the State Capitol.

“Toni Herkert is one of those unique individuals who combines deep knowledge of both the legislative and agency processes with a lot of tenacity and pragmatism,” said Jerry Deschane, the League’s Executive Director. “She will be an outstanding representative for municipal leaders in Wisconsin.”

Toni is the former long-time policy advisor for Wisconsin State Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay). She most recently served as a Policy Analyst and Clerk of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy. She is an expert on issues related to water regulation, including permitting and zoning. Toni holds a B.S. in Environmental Science and Political Science from St. Norbert College and M.S. in Environmental Science and Policy from the University of Wisconsin Green Bay. She has also previously worked at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Lakes and NEW Water (formally Green Bay Metropolitan Sewerage District).

VISIT Milwaukee coordinator named Equal Rights Commission Chair



VISIT Milwaukee Volunteer and Staffing Coordinator Tony Snell has been appointed chair of the City of Milwaukee Equal Rights Commission. Earlier this year, Snell was appointed by the mayor of Milwaukee to serve a second three-year term and was elected vice chair. Additionally, Snell worked for the Democratic National

Convention, providing direct support for the convention. Now, Snell assumes the role of chair.

In his first official speaking engagement as chair on Dec. 9, Snell announced a major achievement for the city. Milwaukee received a score of 100 on the Human Rights Campaign Municipality Equality Index for the third straight year. In fact, this perfect score was a key reason why the Democratic National Convention chose Milwaukee as its host city.

Best Western Premier Waterfront Hotel and Convention Center recognized with esteemed honor

The Best Western Premier Waterfront Hotel and Convention Center in Oshkosh received the coveted M.K. Guertin Award, Best Western® Hotels & Resorts' most prestigious honor recognizing top-performing hotels within the company. The award was presented this month at Best Western's first-ever Virtual Convention in front of a large virtual audience consisting of hoteliers across the company's brand portfolio, corporate staff and senior leadership, and industry partners and peers. The M.K. Guertin Award is held in high regard, as hotels that receive this award best represent the vision of Best Western's founder and demonstrate exceptional levels of quality, guest satisfaction and dedication to the brand. The hotels must also meet other brand standards and membership requirements to qualify for this award. The Best Western Premier Waterfront Hotel and Convention Center is one of only 60 hotels out of more than 2,200 Best Western-branded properties in North America to receive this award.



Tom Graybill honored by MPI's Wisconsin Chapter



Congratulations to Tom Graybill, Tri-Marq Communications, Inc., recipient of the Wisconsin Chapter of Meeting Professionals International's 2020 Hall of Fame award. The award was presented at MPI's annual gala, held this year in October at the brand new state of the art Brookfield Conference Center.

Monona Terrace offers robust infrastructure crucial for hosting virtual events

Turning an in-person meeting into a virtual meeting takes more than simply telling people to sign up for an online service. Monona Terrace has the digital infrastructure, technical expertise, full-time audio-visual staff, and meeting planning experience to be your partner in taking your meeting virtual.

The studio at Monona Terrace will help you stand out when most other virtual meetings look the same. It starts with the technical specifications: Using two separate Internet service providers (ISPs) with unique paths into the facility, both over fiber connections and wireless links, ensures that you will always have an Internet connection and therefore a successful virtual meeting. Redundancies in the internal network at key connection points ensure both wired and wireless clients will have access to the Internet. Monona Terrace follows industry best practices for all of its upgrades and offers state-of-the-art equipment and infrastructure – all meticulously maintained.



Brag a Little Bit!

Send your news to Kristin at kmcguine@wsae.org, and we will include it in future issues of *VantagePoint*. Please note that this is included as a benefit of your WSAE membership, and is available to you at no additional cost.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

As of January 15, 2021

David Barrett, American Society of Gene & Cell Therapy
Bruce Bautch, TEAM, Inc
Laura Borst, American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry
Rachel Buendia, Executive Director, Inc
Laura Lutter Cole, VISIT Milwaukee
Jeremiah Cook, CMP, Experience Rochester MN
Sue Daniels, Wisconsin Institute of Certified Public Accountants
Jody Felski, Executive Director, Inc
Betsy Foss-Campbell, American Society of Gene & Cell Therapy
Jordan Held, Association Acumen, LLC
Miranda Helt, Wisconsin Bankers Association
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Nathan Jurkowski, Building Advantage
Lisa Kennedy, FAIA, AIA Wisconsin
Cora Kinney, AMPED Association Management
Krystal Livingston, Executive Director, Inc
Pam Lohnes, Metropolitan Builders Association
Gus Martinez, GSM Consulting
Laura Otto, American Society of Gene & Cell Therapy
Francis Parker, MDS Association Management
Kayla Perron, Great Lakes Management Company
John Rasche, Wisconsin Institute of Certified Public Accountants
Pablo Sanchez, Park Bank
Eric Skrum, Wisconsin Bankers Association
Mykel Wedig, Cooperative Network
Candice Wegner, Wisconsin Dental Association
Alex Wendland, American Society of Gene & Cell Therapy
Taylor Woods, Metropolitan Builders Association

THANK YOU RENEWING MEMBERS

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Derek Allen, Associated General Contractors of Wisconsin
Amanda Armitage, Wisconsin Institute of Certified Public Accountants
Gretchen Armitage, Executive Director, Inc
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Ally Bates, Wisconsin Bankers Association
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Troy Blewett, National Funeral Directors Association
Amy Bliss, CAE, Wisconsin Housing Alliance
Dajen M Bohacek, Plumbing Mechanical Sheet Metal Contractors™ Alliance
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Cheri Neal, MM, ACC, National Speakers Association of Wisconsin
David Nelson, Metropolitan Builders Association
Lisa Nelson, The Rees Group, Inc
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Kathy Olejnik, Executive Director, Inc
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Association Network Supportive, Looking Forward to Post-COVID World

by Michelle Czosek, CAE



I'm at my kitchen counter with my cup of coffee in the quiet of a Saturday morning – This is where I always write my *VantagePoint* column. It's sunny and looks beautiful outside with snow covering the yard. It looks warm for winter, but I know the temperature outside right now is

three degrees. So, things are not always as they appear.

I think that people are not always as they appear either. There is a side that you show to co-workers, friends, and the public, and there is the side that holds the real you.

There have been several reminders to me over the last few weeks that people all handle the stress of living during COVID-19 in different ways. There are fears and pressure that some people have no one to talk to about, and without as many outdoor activities available, this can be a long stretch for anyone.

WSAE is excited to have been asked by Breast Cancer Recovery to partner with other organizations, including Gilda's Club Madison, on a free event in April. WSAE members are invited, along with the general public, to attend this event addressing re-entry into the world post-COVID. *Sharing the Knowledge* with Dr. Shilagh Mirgain will take place on Thursday, April 8 from 11:30 am-1:15 pm. Her topic will be *Post-COVID: How to leave your house and join others*. I'm looking forward to this offering, as it's something a little different for WSAE and it's an important topic as we begin to get back to life outside our homes and pods.

Thank you to our CEO members who have embraced the virtual CEO Café model that we've been using. While it is different from our usual CEO groups meeting in Milwaukee and Madison for breakfast, lunch or happy hour, it's

been a wonderful opportunity to have all of the CEOs, from across the state, together to tackle some great topics. If you are an association CEO who has not attended yet, I encourage you to give it a try. There's a wealth of information and support available from your peers during these one-hour sessions. One of the things I love the most is that there are not only first-time CEOs on the call, but also executives who have been in association management for years. It means a lot that they not only find value in what they gain on these calls, but also give back to others who may just be starting out. It's another example of us all being in this together and the association world being a tight-knit community.

While we are all anxious to get back to in-person events, the Road Show, this year will be virtual and we are offering two "stops" along this year's Virtual Road Show route. The first is March 4, when we will welcome Shari Pash presenting *Communicating Value to Maximize Member Engagement*. The second stop takes place on March 18, when we'll tackle *Unpacking Hybrid Events*. Megan

Denhardt will lead a panel discussion where we will dive into the topic of hybrid events, since everyone is wondering if they will be the future of meetings and how they will be delivered in a budget conscious way.

I look forward to seeing you virtually at the Road Show or an upcoming CEO Café, and then in person at Spring Foreward at the Grand Geneva on June 7-8.

As always, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or any WSAE Board member if you have questions or ideas for ways WSAE can serve our members. ■

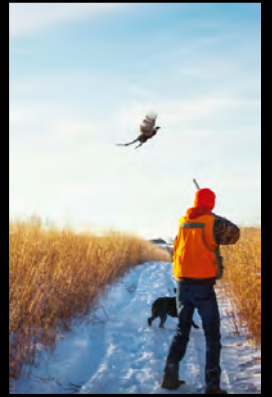
Take care,

Michelle

ONE OF THE THINGS I LOVE THE MOST IS THAT THERE ARE NOT ONLY FIRST-TIME CEOS ON THE CALL, BUT ALSO EXECUTIVES WHO HAVE BEEN IN ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT FOR YEARS. IT MEANS A LOT THAT THEY NOT ONLY FIND VALUE IN WHAT THEY GAIN ON THESE CALLS, BUT ALSO GIVE BACK TO OTHERS WHO MAY JUST BE STARTING OUT.



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