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TRACIE HALL

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Management

2023 | FALL ISSUE | V108

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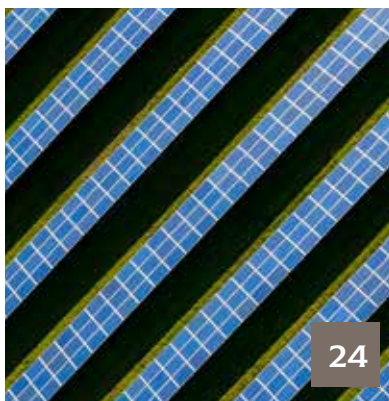
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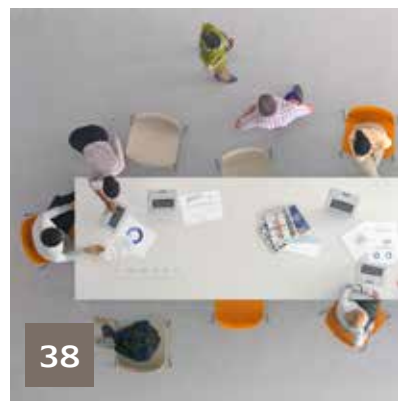
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LETTER FROM THE CEO

How Associations Will Shape the Future of Work

This is the future of work. These are the skills necessary to thrive in today's workplace. These are the skills that are impossible to replace with AI. Human skills.

I think a lot about work. Like any association professional, I wear many hats and sometimes spend my non-working hours mulling over projects and challenges.

But it's more than that. I truly enjoy thinking about the way we work, how effective teams thrive, and what's on the horizon for our industry.

I'm also a technologist. I have spent many years shaping technology strategies for associations. I have a deep appreciation for how marrying the right technology with the right strategy can propel organizations forward and help individuals achieve the wildest BHAGs (big, hairy, audacious goals).

So, when I think of the theme "**Tomorrow is Now**," I think of not just technology. Instead, it is about the future of work, leadership, and people networks. I think of the future of management and organizational structures. I think of artificial intelligence and how it

will impact our businesses presenting both new challenges and opportunities. I think about **Tracie Hall**, featured on the cover of this issue, and how she's leading with agility and innovation at the helm of a 147-year-old organization.

Deloitte has a Future of Work Institute™ for college students to "build a set of human skills that are common across all careers, amplify their resiliency, and adaptive mindset in the face of constant change, and provide the framework and environment to envision and design fulfilling, meaningful work life." A graphic depicts the seven "human skills" necessary to build capabilities such as: empathetic listening, collaboration and teaming, applied creativity, and growth mindset.

Here are the seven skills:

- Empathy
- Emotional intelligence
- Written and verbal communication
- Adaptability and resilience
- Curiosity
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Logical reasoning

This is the future of work. These are the skills necessary to thrive in today's workplace. These are the skills that are impossible to replace with AI. Human skills.

Luckily, I believe most associations are doing these things fairly well and are poised to further lean into these skills. Our industry is all about creating community and sharing information amongst like-minded professionals. I invite you to dig into the list above and think about your own skillset. Where do you excel? Where can you grow? The future depends on it.

These skills aren't just essential for our staff, but also for our members. Our ability to connect on a deeper level with members is crucial to the future of this industry. Shifting our focus to the future may require a change in governance processes as well. We must become more agile, responsive, and inclusive in our own decision-making.

One critical challenge we face is the transition of leadership within our associations. The timeline for volunteers to ascend to board positions must be shortened significantly. If we allow this process to stretch over a decade, we risk losing the vibrant pipeline of fresh ideas and perspectives that keep our associations dynamic. Let us work together to streamline this transition, ensuring that aspiring leaders have the opportunity to contribute their talents and insights sooner rather than later.

What forces do you see at play when it comes to the future of work? I'd love to hear from you on this. Visit our online community to sound off on this topic. Go to **MyForum.AssociationForum.org** and find the topic **"The Future of Work"** in the **All Member Meetup Community**.



As we step into the workplace of the future, let us do so with confidence, adaptability, and a strong sense of purpose. Our associations have always been a source of innovation, collaboration, and progress.

Thank you for your role in the future of this industry.

Association Forum is here to support you as a new power leader. In addition to volunteering or joining a Shared Interest Group, below are some programs that can help you develop the skills and mindset to advance in your career.

FUNCTIONAL EXPERT

- Association 101 & Association 201
- Forty Under 40
- FORUM Magazine
- Holiday Showcase®
- Honors Gala
- Webinars
- Women's Executive Forum™

EMPOWERED MIDDLE

- CAE Study Group
- Director's Kitchen Cabinet
- Emerging Leaders Program
- Forty Under 40
- FORUM Magazine
- Holiday Showcase
- Honors Gala
- Webinars
- Women's Executive Forum

C-SUITE

- Executive Leaders
- FORUM Magazine
- Holiday Showcase
- Honors Gala
- Kitchen Cabinets
- Webinars
- Women's Executive Forum



ARTESHA MOORE, FASAE, CAE

PRESIDENT & CEO
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Bring your next meeting to Omaha and get ready for big city vibes with a heavy dose of friendly. We're not one to brag, but with more than \$8 billion in development throughout the city, we're kind of a big deal (we say humbly). Our 346,000 square feet of convention center space is within walking distance to more than 3,500 downtown hotel rooms and over 90 restaurants, pubs, and unique shops. **Beginning this year, enjoy a new sprawling 90-acre downtown urban oasis with waterfront views, a new Luminarium to explore astonishing phenomena, and Steelhouse Omaha, a modern downtown live music venue.** Coming in 2026, a modern streetcar will take you to even more hotel, restaurant and entertainment options. You're welcome.

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SCAN TO SEE
MORE ABOUT
OMAHA'S BIG
CHANGES.

As part of our efforts to provide a Welcoming Environment® for our members, we are providing a copy of Association Forum's Core Values translated into **Spanish** by Interpro Translation Solutions, Inc.

Be a Welcoming Environment

We are a welcoming environment that actively seeks to enhance the larger community by recognizing the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. We will make everyone who interacts with us feel welcomed, represented, engaged, inspired and empowered.

Embrace Innovation and Quality

We love to try new ideas and seek inspiration from inside and outside the association community — we value improvements big and small. Experimenting with breakthroughs is encouraged and celebrated; however, we know when to pull the plug. We aim to continuously improve.

Have Fun and Stay Positive

It's a fact that you generally spend more time with your co-workers than you do with your own family. We strive to make our work environment one that is fun, positive and an overall great place to work.

Open and Honest Communication and Teamwork

You don't know what you don't know! Effective communication is key. We shall cultivate an environment where we speak openly, honestly and with the goal of building a better team. Candor is constructively embraced. We will work collaboratively to deliver value to members.

Accountability—Own It

We hold each other accountable and expect people to respectfully ask questions and raise concerns. Because work requires interdependent teams and collaboration, we will trust and depend on each other to be responsive and to deliver value and quality services to stakeholders.

Win with Integrity

We operate ethically, contributing our time, talents and know-how to advance our communities where we work and live. We commit to growing our association in ways that benefit the environment and society.

Como parte de nuestros esfuerzos por brindar un Welcoming Environment® a nuestros miembros, le proporcionamos una copia de nuestros Valores Fundamentales traducidos al español por Interpro Translation Solutions, Inc.

Ser un entorno acogedor

Ofrecemos un entorno acogedor que busca mejorar a la comunidad en general de forma activa, al reconocer que un todo es más que la suma de sus partes. Haremos que todos los que interactúen con nosotros se sientan bienvenidos, representados, involucrados, inspirados y empoderados.

Adoptar la innovación y calidad

Nos encanta probar nuevas ideas y buscamos inspiración dentro y fuera de la asociación comunitaria; valoramos las mejoras, tanto grandes como pequeñas. Alentamos y celebramos la experimentación relacionada con los adelantos; sin embargo, sabemos cuándo suspenderla. Nuestro objetivo es mejorar continuamente.

Diviértase y mantenga una actitud positiva

Está comprobado que generalmente usted pasa más tiempo con sus compañeros de trabajo que con su propia familia. Nos esforzamos por lograr que nuestro entorno de trabajo sea divertido, positivo y en general un excelente lugar para trabajar.

Comunicación franca y honesta, y trabajo en equipo

¡Uno no sabe lo que no sabe! La comunicación efectiva es clave. Promoveremos un entorno en el que hablemos de manera franca y honesta, con el objetivo de construir un mejor equipo. Incorporamos la franqueza de manera constructiva. Trabajaremos conjuntamente, a fin de generar valor para los miembros.

Asuma la responsabilidad

Asumimos mutuamente la responsabilidad y esperamos que las personas hagan preguntas y planteen inquietudes de manera respetuosa. Dado que el trabajo requiere de equipos y colaboración interdependientes, confiaremos y dependeremos los unos de los otros para ser receptivos y generar valor y servicios de calidad para los grupos de interés.

Triunfe con integridad

Operamos de manera ética, aportando nuestro tiempo, talentos y conocimientos para avanzar en las comunidades donde trabajamos y vivimos. Nos comprometemos a desarrollar nuestra asociación de maneras que benefician al entorno y a la sociedad.

TIME 100
MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE
2023

TRACIE HALL

Will Change the Way
You Think About
Association Management

By Kim Kelly, CAE

• *The
American
Library
Association's
executive
director
is the
association
executive of
the future.*

"Free people read freely."

Tracie Hall repeated that phrase three times during her powerful speech at the 2023 TIME100 Gala earlier this year. Hall is the executive director of the American Library Association (ALA) and a 2023 TIME100 Icon. We see her as a new power leader.

The TIME100 list is an annual selection of the 100 most influential people in the world, assembled by the editors at the news magazine Time. In 2007, managing editor Richard Stengel clarified that TIME100 focused on influence rather than popularity, saying: "Influence is hard to measure, and what we look for is people whose ideas, whose example, whose talent, whose discoveries transform the world we live in. Influence is less about the hard power of force than the soft power of ideas and example."

Association Forum spoke with Hall about her leadership style and her journey from directing a homeless shelter to enrolling in library school to leading the oldest and largest library association in the world.

NOTE: THIS INTERVIEW HAS BEEN EDITED FOR LENGTH AND CLARITY.

Tell us a little bit about what the idea of new power leadership means to you and how you see it playing out at the American Library Association (ALA)?

My mandate, of course, is our mission—which is ultimately to provide access to learning and information for all. I have to think about the fact that we are living in a time where the “for all” part of that, is being problematized.

And the “for all” part of that is being seen by some groups as reverse discrimination, or somehow countering racism with another form of bias. Or is that “for all” going to lead to too much sharing of power and wealth in a way that upsets the apple cart of racialized capitalism? Today, when we say “American,” what we know is that we’re talking about everyone who calls this country home, with all our demographic variables and not just a few.

I’ve been really clinging to ALA’s mission. But I’ve also been making sure that my colleagues not only understand, but wrangle with the fact that to do our work and to carry out our mission today is probably going to open us up to more scrutiny, more politicization, and more weaponized responses than it has in the past. This is due to censorship, recent court decisions cracking down on affordable access to education, and the narrowing gateways to people of color and first-generation students that we must find a way to address.

Tell us more about the politicization of libraries and how that’s affected the ALA directly.

Well, we’ve had to think strategically because a lot of our member organizations are dependent on funding at the federal, state, and local level—but chiefly the local level, right? As we navigate the culture wars, we’ve seen more politicians—especially newer ones or ones who are aspiring to higher office—take very politi-

cally motivated, very public, stances of being pro-censorship and challenge materials in public and school libraries based on LGBTQIA and BIPOC content, even the most highly regarded works of literature.

We have to balance acting on our values around intellectual freedom and the right to read—and we are going to continue to do that unequivocally—but also doing that in a way that is strategic and service focused so that we don’t fall into the trap of being put on the defensive, or putting libraries on the defensive..

We’ve had to be guided by what it means to be an association, as opposed to another type of nonprofit, which is that it is our duty to sustain the library and information services profession and to preserve libraries as facilitators of learning, civic access, and community building.

It seems the politics found you, but you still need to take a stance to protect your members.

Yes. For instance, the Spectrum Scholarship Program, is our leading diversity pipeline accelerator. It was created twenty-five years ago to expand the range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, lived experiences and skillsets among librarians who have traditionally been mostly white. Spectrum is not “political.” It is practical. If libraries are to be relevant in the 21st century, then they need to be resonant and accessible to people for whom English is not a primary language. They need to be in service to people who have been incarcerated. They must be in service to people who may not be able to read and write at a particular level. They need to be able to effectively serve communities where there’s generational poverty and generational limits to educational access. Spectrum was created to respond to those realities.

It isn’t about being political, it is about trying to ensure that enhancing learning and ensuring information access for all is real for us.

All associations are grappling with expanding diversity and inclusion. We can't see that as political or even altruistic. We must see that as part of our sustainability plan.

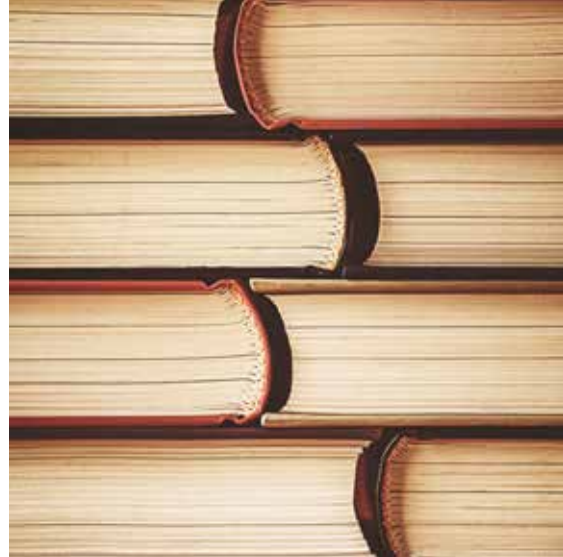
We talk about sustainability a lot at Association Forum. Demographics are shifting within the United States, but also within many of the professions we serve. If associations can't catch up to those changes, then where will their place be?

Yes, and younger members understand this. One thing we must think about is not that a younger generation is going to think more broadly throughout the course of their life, it's just that the problems they face are going to become more complex. And we must prepare the next generation of professionals to deal with those problems, and opportunities, as they arise.

Tell us a little bit about your leadership style and how it has formed over the course of your life.

One thing that's for sure is I was raised in a household that valued community service. My maternal grandparents are products of the Great Migration, coming from Louisiana to Los Angeles for financial opportunities and to escape the brutality of the Jim Crow racism they were experiencing there.

When they came to LA, like a lot of people, they lived in unstable housing. This was the 1940's, and if you can imagine, they were living in garages. They had four kids and neither my granddad nor grandmother were



fully literate. My grandmother would go to the company to pay her bills. I realized the reason she did that instead of mailing them is because she didn't write well, and she needed somebody to tell her "You owe \$51."

And so, when they finally got a house in LA, they opened it to people coming up from the South or people who were poor or unhoused. I grew up with that kind of service ethic. To me it was an expectation that you shared what you had and that you didn't abandon people in need.

As I went to college and started to become aware of more political movements and activist movements—I spent a year as a student abroad in East Africa and that is where I became very aware of the gulf that existed between the rich and the poor, because there wasn't a middle class as such.

I saw a lot by the time I was 20—I had my own lived experience and I had observed more of the world. I traveled a lot and I saw some devastating poverty and the impact on public health. I think that formed in me a social consciousness and I wasn't interested in ever working in an environment that wouldn't allow me to act on that. I have to do the work of justice because I've seen what the absence of justice creates.

We have to balance acting on our values around intellectual freedom and the right to read...but also doing that in a way that is strategic and service focused so that we don't fall into the trap of being put on the defensive, or putting libraries on the defensive.

I directed a homeless shelter in LA after I graduated with my first masters degree. I saw literacy as one of the reasons why people were caught in the poverty cycle or facing housing precarity. That eventually inspired me to go to library school.

What went through your mind when you found out you were chosen as one of Time's 100 most influential people?

Oh wow. It's funny because you aren't thinking about awards when you're working, right? I instantly recognized that it wasn't about me at all. It was about the field. It's about the fact that librarianship, that libraries and books and even ideas, are being considered contraband. We're living in a time when some people consider intellectual freedom and critical thinking to be dangerous. As odd as it seems, we are living in a time where people are creating laws to make access to ideas less available to the average person.

Libraries are on the frontline of that conversation; they're on the frontline of that debate in our society today. So, after I got over my disbelief, I realized that it wasn't about me as much as it is about the fact that the American Library Association and the libraries and librarians we serve are on the frontlines of this conversation.

It's been one of the most humbling experiences, but it's been easier to carry because I know I carry it with ALA's membership and the more than 300,000 people who work in our sector.

It's wild that we're still having conversations about censorship and banning books in 2023, isn't it?

Anytime power is shifting, censorship emerges, right? Anytime society is on the verge of shared power, or greater democracy, you always see this clamping down on what people can read or write. I have gotten the chance to travel in a lot of countries

that were facing regime changes or where maybe there was an autocracy. And anytime I've been in a country where the people in power weren't popularly elected, or there is deep political tension, books are always hard to find.

Today we have to see what's happening in this country as part of a continuum. We see rising groups—we see the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) community being a rising majority—and we also see more women gaining access to the halls of power. And so, yes, there's definite forces that want to clamp down on that.

You said this award means a lot to the library industry. What do you think it means for the association industry?

I hadn't thought about that. That's a good question. I think what it means for the library community is that it recognizes that librarians have always been, to some degree, agents of civic change. I accept the award as a librarian, but as an association leader, I think it says the same—that our associations are vehicles of civic engagement, civic access, and also civic change.

What do you see as the most pressing issue facing association leaders right now?

I think it's really important that we are able to steward the notion of the association through these times of deep socio-political divide and economic instability and change. The association has a very specific function in the evolution of contemporary society. Not only does it codify techniques and certain types of knowledge, but it also sets collective standards of how we work and the values that we hold as professions.

And that's really important today because we have fewer and fewer places where we can collectively congregate, share ideas,

*: I have to do
: the work
: of justice
: because I've
: seen what
: the absence
: of justice
: creates.*

It is my responsibility to make the dreams that [my family] held, some of which they could not act on, come to fruition. That's not just about career attainment, but also how I give back to the community because that was a value my family held highest.

• “I see
• growing
• association
• membership
• as a form of
• movement
• building.”

want to work in nonprofit management. A lot of the people who aspire to service or who are motivated by social responsibility and social justice don't know a lot about associations. We have to build a deeper bench of talent and not wait until people stumble upon the association field.

Agreed! Where do you find inspiration?

From the community. I find a lot of inspiration from young people. I have always loved young people—especially children and teenagers. It's not an accident that I started my library career in young adult services and working with youth. I think there's this moment, especially in adolescence, where you are asking big questions and have this deep belief that you should be wrangling with big questions and acting on big ideas. There's something about that time period where possibility seems infinite.

That has always attracted me. I get a lot of inspiration from young people, but also from where I grew up and my family's past. It's not only the trials that they've been through, but also the way they made it through them. I believe that I'm paying forward what my family invested in me. And it is my responsibility to make the dreams that they held, some of which they could not act on, come to fruition. That's not just about career attainment, but also how I give back to the community because that was a value my family held highest.

I want to live my life in a way that is generative. Thinking about my family's sacrifices, thinking about the possibilities young people create—all those things are driving forces and sources of inspiration. [E](#)



KIM KELLY, CAE


EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
ASSOCIATION
FORUM

OWNER,
KIM KELLY
CONSULTING

debate, and co-create. I think the association of today actually plays an outsized role. I think a challenge is going to be to preserve the notion of the association so it can be an intentional vehicle for social good. I think another challenge is going to be to continue to build our membership numbers, because that is the body that gives us our strength. I believe in the social responsibility that comes with collectivizing as an association and I see growing association membership as a form of movement building.

Great. Anything else you want to add?

I think it would behoove associations to do a better job of opening pathways to association management and leadership. It's a career that people fall into. I do a lot of informational interviews with people who

A woman with curly hair is shown in profile, holding a snifter glass filled with amber liquid. She is wearing a light-colored top and several bracelets on her wrist. The background is a warm, dimly lit bar with other patrons and a striped shirt visible. The text "RAISE THE BAR IN BOURBON CITY." is overlaid in large, bold, white capital letters.

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BAR IN
BOURBON
CITY.**



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**29
NOV**

8–9 a.m.

9 a.m.–12 p.m.

1–2:30 p.m.

2:30–5 p.m.

5–6 p.m.

Continental Breakfast

Pre-Conference Sessions*

Opening Keynote

Breakout Sessions

Opening Reception

**30
NOV**

7:30–8:15 a.m.

8:15–10:30 a.m.

10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

12:30–4:30 p.m.

Continental Breakfast

Breakout Sessions

Brunch Keynote

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This year, we will come together at Holiday Showcase to innovate, evolve and push traditional boundaries.

The year is 1988. George Michael, Whitney Houston, and Bon Jovi top the charts. “A Different World” and “Cheers” are two of the most popular shows on TV. A movie ticket costs about \$3.50. And, it was the year of the first ever Holiday Showcase®.

Association Forum is proud to serve as an open case study for this community. In the past 35 years, Holiday Showcase has become an industry pillar. You may think of it as the meeting where association professionals gather and get business done. Or you may think of it as the meeting where you reunite with former colleagues and industry peers. Or maybe, for you, it's the meeting where you eat gingerbread and sip cocktails on the exhibit hall floor.

This year, Holiday Showcase is all those things, and yet, so much more!

As Association Forum has evolved, Holiday Showcase has evolved with us. Today, we're building a bolder, brighter future for our members, our partners, and the associations we serve. To make it a reality, Holiday Showcase will be the platform to test old assumptions, new methods, and most importantly, ourselves. Over the course of two full days, association professionals from all levels and corners of the industry will gather for top-notch education and unparalleled learning opportunities.

This year, we will come together at Holiday Showcase to innovate, evolve and push traditional boundaries.

The goal? To walk away fortified by ideas and solutions that will make an impact on ourselves and the associations we serve.

What can you expect from Holiday Showcase: Incubate?

Here are five ways this year's Holiday Showcase will be like nothing you've seen before!

1 Hold two full days on your calendar for Holiday Showcase: Incubate

This year's meeting will feature a day and a half of education before the exhibit hall opens. Association Forum has shifted our meeting schedule for 2023, no longer hosting Forum Forward or SmartTech. This was a strategic decision to focus association resources on the most impactful events. Yet, we didn't want to miss out on offering stellar education. This year at Holiday Showcase, expect diverse sessions across the continuum of association management topics, just like you'd find at an annual meeting.

2 Bring the whole team

Holiday Showcase has had the reputation of being focused on meeting planners. We get it—the exhibit hall is an excellent resource to the meetings community. In recent years, we've worked to include both education and vendors that touch other areas of association management. This year, we suggest you bring the whole team! We will have sessions for every stage of an association professional's journey. Furthermore, the networking at Holiday Showcase is amazing. The usual cheery networking will be enhanced by themed pavilions on the exhibit floor, a wellness space, and more.

3 Focus on the future

If you've been reading this magazine (and we really hope you have!), you know that we are focusing on three main content areas at Forum: Intrapreneurship, Tomorrow is Now, and New Power Leadership. We call this program Excelerate, and each of these content areas will be represented in educational sessions and on the exhibit hall floor at Holiday Showcase. You can attend a session on the latest tech on Day 1 (November 29), and then stop by the Tomorrow is Now pavilion to shop the latest tech offerings on Day 2 (November 30). While technology and leadership enhance our organizations, we're also looking to provide personal growth opportunities. That's why we'll have a Career Center (back by popular demand!) on the exhibit hall floor as well. Visit the career center for professional headshots, make an appointment with a career advisor for bespoke career guidance, or meet with other professionals to help you achieve your career goals. New this year, association leaders (CEOs, CFOs, HR professionals, Directors) can get answers to tough questions and expert guidance through consultations with HR Source.

4 One idea can change the world®

Like Holiday Showcase, this trademarked phrase is a part of Association Forum history. We truly believe that one idea can change the world. This year, we're honoring this idea with a stage that will feature quick, thought-provoking talks around this theme. Look for this stage on the exhibit hall floor during Day 2 (November 30)!

5 Four wins

When we partner with organizations, we strive for not just a win-win situation, but a win-win-win-win outcome. That means it's a win for our members, a win for our partners, a win for Association Forum, and a win for the overall community. Holiday Showcase is a dazzling example of four wins. If you happen to fall into one of those four groups (hint: you do!), we'd like you to come see for yourself how this meeting can be a win for you and your organization. [F](#)

INCUBATE



ASSOCIATION FORUM WAS FOUNDED ON THE IDEAS OF COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION.

We've always believed in the power of connection, but since the pandemic our appreciation of it has grown tenfold. Holiday Showcase will be different this year and we are excited to share these changes with you. Yet, above all, you will find the same connection (and cocktails) that have kept you coming back year after year for 35 years.

This year at Holiday Showcase, expect diverse sessions across the continuum of association management topics, just like you'd find at an annual meeting.






Back by popular demand at Holiday Showcase: Our Career Center! Get a professional headshot, make an appointment with a career advisor for bespoke career guidance, or meet with other professionals to help you achieve your career goals.



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ASSOCIATION **FORUM**[®] **af**

To find out more about designing your partnership with Association Forum contact Dan Melesurgo at melesurgo@associationforum.org

“You can’t have a better tomorrow if you are thinking about yesterday all the time.”

CHARLES KETTERING

EXCELERATE



NEW POWER LEADERSHIP



TOMORROW IS NOW



INTRAPRENEURSHIP

Kettering, quoted above, was an American engineer, inventor, and longtime head of research for General Motors. He is responsible for 186 U.S. patents and invented the all-electric automobile starter. His words ring true. Innovation is not about what didn’t work yesterday, it’s about looking ahead. Many of our organizations are still deeply focused on the impacts of COVID-19 on our industries, our office schedules, and our workforce. While the pandemic no doubt still colors our lives in many ways, it is time to accept these changes and move forward. Call it the “new normal” or “tomorrow is now” or just call it life. Regardless, we hope you find inspiration from the innovators featured in this issue.

Kettering was featured on the cover of Time magazine in 1933. In 2023, Time recognized American Library Association Executive Director Tracie Hall as one of the world’s 100 most influential people. Turn to page 8 to read our interview with Hall.

ESG IN ASSOCIATIONS:

Aligning Values with Impactful Change

By Candice Warltier

: *An increasing number of associations are rethinking what ESG means for their members, boards of directors, leadership teams, and employees.*

The term ESG, standing for environmental, social, and governance, continues to evolve in the corporate world.

Historically, ESG focused on investment, a method to screen investments based on corporate policies and to encourage companies to act responsibly. However, these initiatives now often incorporate CSG (corporate, social, and governance) and sustainability.

An increasing number of associations are rethinking what ESG means for their members, boards of directors, leadership teams, and employees. To aid associations in navigating ESG complexities, the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) developed the Association Insights Center. With the help of strategic partners, including Association Forum, the center provides on-demand intelligence and tools to support association leadership teams.



Additionally, ASAE conducted a survey of 165 association executives and found that while many associations have taken initial steps towards addressing ESG, several have deeply ingrained programs that integrate ESG into their business models.

The survey revealed that association leaders view social issues as the top ESG priority. Topics addressed include diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, accessibility, equal access, human rights, labor standards, social justice, sourcing, organizational culture, and work-force development.

Patrick Glaser, Chief Practice Officer at McKinley Advisors, stated that there are numerous unique examples of how associations are approaching the social aspect of ESG. Some associations begin with clear diversity statements, incorporating them into their missions, leadership diversity, and recruitment policies. Others are developing programs to enhance and facilitate membership diversity, providing confidence to teach their members inclusivity. Associations are also developing policies on responding to arising social issues and addressing work-force burnout.

Associations that are focusing on the environmental component of ESG often have ties to the environment. Some are identifying the amount of carbon emissions emitted from travel to meetings and exploring offset options. Others are thinking about the pollution their industry is producing, measuring a specific field's toll, and seeking solutions.

For those who are looking at the governance issue, some associations are focusing on transparency, publishing leaders and staff salaries. Others are rethinking where they are investing their reserves and focusing on ESG investments.

A Closer Look

While ESG is on the radar of many associations, most established ESG policies are found in large associations, mainly due to increased stakeholder pressure and resource availability.

The American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA), is an association for scientists and professionals committed to preserving and ensuring occupational and environmental health and safety (OEHS). AIHA recently established ESG guidelines in line with their mission. The AIHA leadership team is taking a proactive approach to educating its 8,000 members about the growing scope of human capital (HC) and ESG initiatives and the impact they have on the OEHS profession.

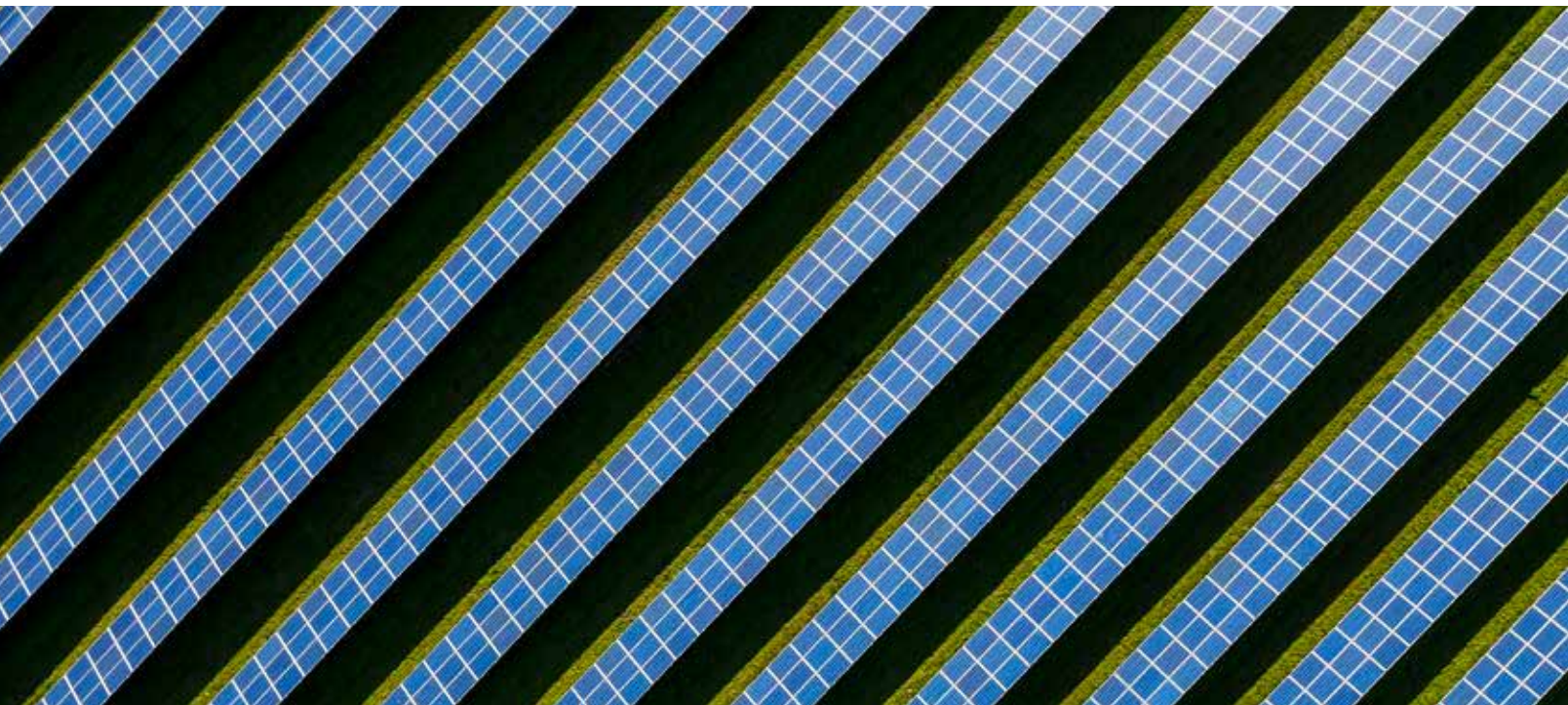
AIHA has included human capital as an area of focus as OEHS professionals are committed to the environmental health and well-being of workers.

"This is front and center to AIHA's mission," said Charles Redinger, Chair, Human Capital/ESG Task Force, AIHA. "Our profession falls under ESG's 'S' category, and our focus is around human capital within the workplace. We formed the Human Capital/ESG committee to impact standards development and to look internally to help educate the members and the profession. The Guidance document was the first piece of that." According to the AIHA HC/ESG Guidance Document, traditional environmental health and safety issues remain top concerns for industrial organizations implementing ESG reporting. According to a survey by PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers), "ensuring worker health and safety" is the second most cited ESG issue for companies, behind only reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Chalmers et al., 2021).

While ESG is on the radar of many associations, most established ESG policies are found in large associations, mainly due to increased stakeholder pressure and resource availability.

Due to the importance of ESG in the OEHS profession, AIHA formed the HC/ESG Task Force to develop the HC/ESG Guidance Document. This tool aids the OEHS practitioners in understanding the HC/ESG fundamentals and their increasing involvement in sustainability/ESG measurement and reporting of OHS metrics. In addition to providing strategic direction, the Guidance Document includes an overview of key terminology, organizations, and evolving standards. It highlights standards that include occupational health and safety (OHS)-related requirements and guidance. Beyond HC/ESG fundamentals, AIHA's HC/ESG Task Force chose to focus on baseline metrics. This is because metrics play a central role in disclosures and reporting.

Additionally, there is increasing nationwide pushback against ESG. Many association execs find it challenging to pursue developing ESG initiatives due to the polarization of ESG issues. It is a divisive and often heated issue that winds up being debated among politicians and in the court of public opinion. While many association leaders are taking steps to integrate ESG programming, they are also apprehensive because of the potential negative publicity or legal consequences with reporting related to ESG. According to the Harvard Law School Forum on Corporate Governance, U.S. securities law and SEC regulations make issuer statements to investors actionable, therefore opening issuers to liability in their ESG disclosures. [\[1\]](#)



Challenges of ESG

Navigating ESG is not without challenges. According to Glaser, one of the biggest challenges is that ESG is a very broad grouping of topics. Associations need to determine which areas align with their mission and justify spending resources.

- : *“Ensuring worker health and safety”*
- : *is the second most cited ESG issue*
- : *for companies, behind only reducing*
- : *greenhouse gas emissions.*

Getting Started

If your organization is a member of ASAE's Association Insights Center, we highly recommend leveraging those ESG resources. If not, you can still begin to move the needle for ESG within your association. Consider the following steps to start your journey:

- Determine if your organization aligns with the E, S, or G in ESG.
- Review your organization's mission to determine appropriate ties to ESG.
- Form a committee.
- Develop metrics.
- Determine audiences.
- Educate members and external audiences on your organization's ESG work.



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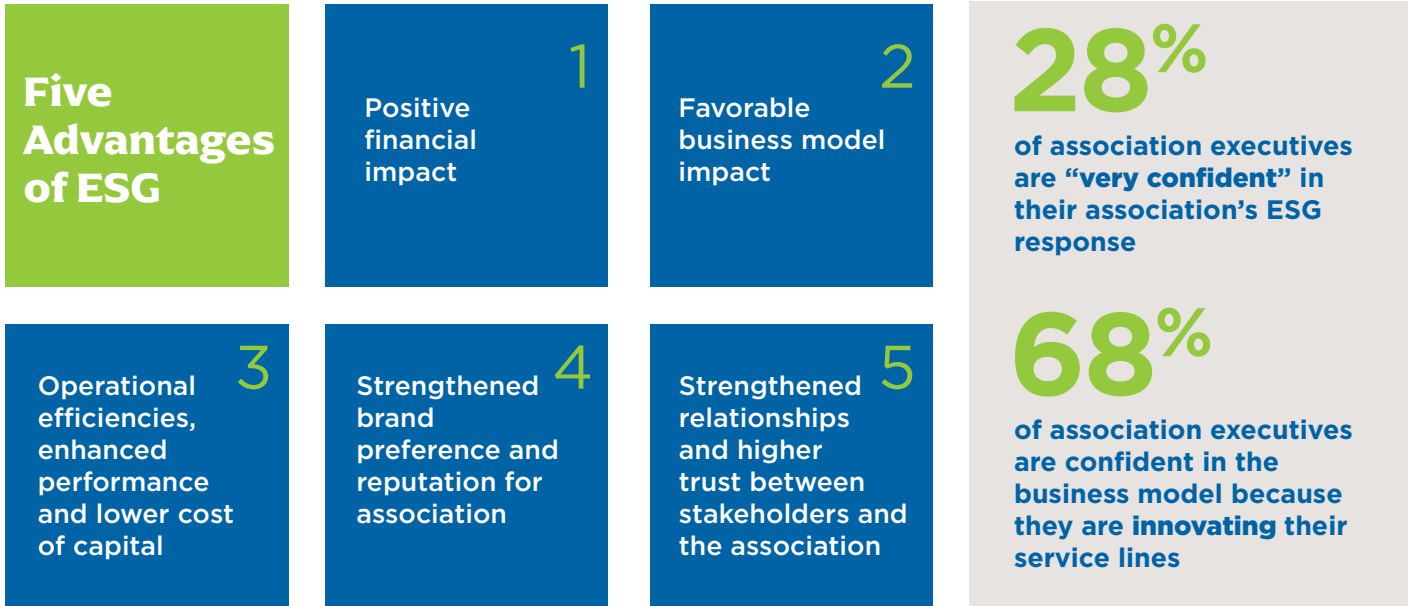


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SCAN ME



Why Organizations Are Confident in Their ESG Response

Organizational **values and culture** support response to ESG issues

Organization leadership places an appropriate amount of **discussion and consideration** on ESG issues

Organization provides **solutions** to ESG issues

Organization has the capacity to respond to ESG issues in a **quick and nimble** way

Top ESG Priorities in Associations



Social Issues

e.g. social justice, DEI, human rights, workforce development, labor standards



Governance Issues

e.g. public perception of executive compensation, socially responsible investment policies, data protection, organizational transparency



Environmental Issues

e.g. climate change, pollution, biodiversity

Key Question for Leadership

How could we leverage ESG to advance our mission and generate financial and operational results that grow the association?



SOURCE: “LEADING WITH ESG FOR ASSOCIATIONS,” PRESENTED BY ASAE AND ASSOCIATION INSIGHTS CENTER.

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CYBER SECURITY:

Upping Your Game to Ensure Your Association Stays Safe

*By Tobin Conley, CAE
and Atabak Akhlaghi*

Cybersecurity is one of those things that we all know we need to care about even if we struggle with the upkeep, like dental hygiene.

When we neglect it, it can go bad. And when it goes bad, it can really bring a world of pain and headaches. Much like dental hygiene, cybersecurity is all about prevention. If you find yourself needing to take active measures to mitigate harm, you've already missed the mark.

It's important to form good habits that protect your organization and keep cybersecurity breaches at bay. So, in order to motivate associations to form better habits and improve their cybersecurity, it is important to clarify what exactly threatens cybersecurity and what strategies best prevent or mitigate a cybersecurity breach. In order to do so, we will examine the who, what, why, where, and how of cybersecurity as well as what constitutes basic prevention measures and advanced prevention measures.



The Who and The Why

Cyberattacks occur when hackers attempt to gain unauthorized access that can be used for some sort of (often financial) gain. Cybersecurity threats can originate from a variety of bad actors in the ever-evolving hacking industry, and so long as there is financial gain in extorting data or committing fraud, there will always be a threat. This is why it pays to remain vigilant and protect your organization.

The What

The “what” of cybersecurity is often simply data—or system access to data. This includes proprietary information about the organization’s business, or Personally Identifiable Information (PII) of members that can be used for identity theft or credit card fraud sought by hackers.

Sometimes, a threat might compromise a workstation as part of a larger plan of attack. For example, a hacker might want to hijack a workstation in order to perform a denial-of-service attack (DoS) in which a machine or network resource is made unavailable to the intended users. Such an attack can be used to ransom something from the victim in exchange for returning access to their workstation.

The Where

Cyberattacks can come from a variety of places. While a great many threats may come from those on the outside, they may also be perpetrated from within your organization if committed by an employee or anyone who may have access to the physical building (such as a cleaning crew), or access to key systems (a partner who provides technology tools or services). Far too often, organizations have a blind spot to the threat from within.

The How

While it’s important to know the who, why, what, and where, that doesn’t get us anywhere without the how. We need to understand how hackers gain access to our information and systems to do their damage so that we can identify the best strategies for

prevention. It’s important to note that while methods of attack, and subsequently methods of prevention, may evolve, the principles behind cybersecurity will largely remain the same.

Social Engineering

The weakest link in cybersecurity is people. It is estimated that at least 90 percent of the potential threats your organization faces will involve some level of social engineering (Webtribunal, 2023). So it’s important to prepare your staff for threats of this kind through training, simulated phishing campaigns, and other follow-up conversations.

The goal is to develop an organization-wide culture of security awareness so that your staff is prepared to make the proper judgment calls to maintain the organization’s security posture in the face of cyberattacks. Staff should be trained to hover over all links contained in emails, avoid visiting suspicious websites, protect sensitive information over an open line, and call or email the organization separately to confirm whenever they are in doubt.

It’s worth noting that social engineering may be the avenue through which hackers can enlist other strategies to harm an organization. For example, a hacker might gain access to an organization’s network through the negligence of an employee, after which that hacker might install ransomware or a virus to carry out their planned attack. So, while your organization will need to have other forms of defense to protect against such attacks, it’s absolutely essential to employ staff training to avoid such gaps in your organization’s cybersecurity. At the end of the day, cybersecurity is everyone’s job—having a strong policy to provide guidelines and keeping staff educated about potential threats goes a long way toward shoring up your digital defenses.

Cracking

While cracking passwords is a far less effective method of attack, it’s important to take the proper precautions in password protection. Users need to be educated to avoid making passwords out of common, identifiable information. The creation of strong, unique passwords is among the most important actions end users can take. Using a solid password management applica-

tion can help your staff more readily maintain such passwords. Additionally, users should avoid using the same password for any two platforms or accounts. Organizationally, you should implement multi-factor authentication where possible to provide an additional layer of security and subvert a majority of such issues. You should also implement lockout timers for multiple failed attempts and a notification system to provide alerts when logins fail for users with greater access such as network admins.

Ransomware And Other Malicious Software

Hackers can install ransomware and other malicious software through a variety of means. Whether they gain access to a network through social engineering or cracking user credentials, hackers can install software on a device within a network to extract data, interrupt access to the network, threaten to restrict access or publicize data, or a variety of other nefarious means. Again, fostering a heightened sense of awareness among your staff, combined with standard technical tools (antivirus/endpoint protection, strong

spam filters, routinely tested backup protocols) will help keep things safe.

The keys to strong cybersecurity: prevention, mitigation and mediation

Associations should strive to create a strong culture of threat awareness among staff, provide a clear cybersecurity policy to follow, and maintain effective and up to date cybersecurity tools. However, sometimes even the best defenses can be breached; that's why it's important to have cybersecurity insurance to help mitigate risk.

Associations should be aware that insurance companies have tightened requirements for obtaining coverage. In addition to world-class technology defenses (as mentioned above), companies are required to establish and maintain a number of policies to show that access controls are in place, systems are routinely updated or patched, and backups are regularly tested.

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They may also require that elements of an association's disaster recovery plan provide detailed responses to various cyber threats. Giving thought beforehand to how best to respond to an attack-related crisis will not only help prepare you should the unthinkable happen, it will also prove to your insurance carrier that you are ready to act if need be.



TOBIN CONLEY, CAE

TOBIN IS THE DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND LEARNING AS WELL AS A SENIOR STRATEGIC CONSULTANT FOR DELCOR, A NONPROFIT TECHNOLOGY COMPANY.

While cybercrime isn't going away anytime soon, there are certainly steps you can take to ensure that your organization's data assets remain protected. By engaging in an ongoing effort that involves both technical tools and human effort, you can protect your organization against the multitude of threats it faces every day. However, like flossing, it's by no means a "one and done" exercise—it requires constant vigilance and attention. [f](#)



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ATABAK IS A PROPOSAL AND MARKETING WRITER FOR DELCOR.



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Revolutionizing Healthcare Quality and Safety:

STRATEGIES, COMPETENCIES, AND THE PATH FORWARD

By Stephanie Mercado
CAE, CPHQ

Healthcare is inundated with ambitions and mandates for quality and safety.

However, the definitions of these terms are still unclear, either because the explanations have been too vague or because each profession within the healthcare workforce perceives quality differently. This is especially problematic when the stakes are as high as they are today for quality, safe and affordable healthcare.

Modern medical marvels indeed allow us to live better, longer lives. Still, it is also true that 25% of people who undergo treatment will face harm due to the healthcare they receive. It is also true that approximately 25% of all healthcare spending is considered wasteful.

In the meantime, healthcare is taking on new ambitions, working hard to advance equity and accelerate the understanding and adoption of AI, among many other goals.

There is a significant concern over the unintended consequences of adding new goals to a system that has yet to achieve consistently optimal results.



Healthcare is taking on new ambitions [however] there is a significant concern over the unintended consequences of adding new goals to a system that has yet to achieve consistently optimal results.

As we seek a progressive strategy in healthcare, we would be wise to consider how leveraging quality and safety as business strategies can accelerate our efforts. We must also consider how to incorporate these new goals into the existing quality and safety systems, processes, and structures, rather than isolating them in a separate silo disconnected from the rest of the work. Healthcare doesn't need "one more thing" to do; it needs a plan to do its best work and systematically integrate ambitions into a broader model to drive excellence. Nationally, quality of care is described as safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable, and person-centered, each requiring attention. These factors can be applied to clinical services, operational roles, or administrative functions.

Given this broad scope of quality, how does a healthcare organization maintain focus, ensure it, and balance its quality functions as a routine part of delivering care? Is it enough to set these priorities of "what" needs to be achieved without more specific guidance on "how" to achieve them? More than two decades have passed since we embraced these mandates, yet we're far from "mission accomplished." What did we miss? What should we consider as we take on more ambitions and mandates for quality and safety?

A missing link in the plan for quality and safety activation has been the workforce. We set goals but missed a key implementation strategy element: readying the workforce, as individuals, teams, and a system, to effectively execute the work.

As a professional in association work, I have dedicated over 20 years to providing courses, webinars, pre-cons, and annual conferences aimed at educating and training the workforce, alongside clinical and non-clinical disciplines. I can tell you—it helps. However, we will never accomplish our goals if we are supporting one clinician or healthcare professional at a time who just so happens to opt into our events. We need to align the work and competencies of teams to achieve our collective goals, and healthcare systems need to embrace their role in optimizing their workforce—including funding competency development and team training.

Healthcare accounts for approximately 20% of GDP in the U.S., so the scope of our collective work is massive. As the industry expects our members to navigate this at the local level, associations play a critical role in helping them even more to address these priorities. We need to question if they have the requisite skills and competencies to achieve these goals, and whether their support staff and leadership do too.

The strategic pursuit of quality in any healthcare organization must also address today's challenges of a dramatically changing industry.




The strategic pursuit of quality in any healthcare organization must also address today's challenges of a dramatically changing industry, with post-pandemic issues like significant and growing workforce shortages, changing technologies, and rising costs. These growing challenges require organizations to find new ways to align expectations across disciplines, assure team collaboration, and accomplish more with less. The question remains: how do you get everyone on the same page, pulling in the same direction, and becoming excited about the possibilities in new ways?

NAHQ—the National Association for Healthcare Quality—is a national leader and enthusiastic partner in assuring that healthcare quality and safety are effectively understood by healthcare professionals, clinicians, and healthcare executives. At a time when our constituents are looking to their professional associations for guidance and leadership, NAHQ is stepping up to create and share universal competency standards for quality and safety. We are continually developing and integrating cutting-edge content, like today's emerging focus on population health.

As we strive to address the unfunded mandates and priorities for healthcare, and a workforce that is disjointed, NAHQ's state-of-the-science unified standard, vocabulary, skills, and competencies for quality and safety are increasingly used to prepare and align the workforce, helping them navigate the changes they face.

Consider the following two questions as you prepare your constituents for the road ahead:

1. Do your constituents have the requisite knowledge and skills in quality and safety? If they are unclear on how to leverage data to drive decisions-making, improve processes and outcomes, or address population health, they need to start there. A solid foundation in these areas is critical. Placing more expectations on shaky ground is never a good idea.
2. Taking on issues like equity or AI (different but similarly complex) can be a distraction if not integrated into the broader quality and safety agenda. Ensure your constituents understand this. Ask them to consider how to systematically incorporate new priorities into existing work so that it can be sustained and relieve workforce burden.

Quality and safety in today's healthcare environment have never been more important! Unleashing the vision and the work of improving quality must be done, and it can be achieved with renewed passion and focus. While priorities and scope may change, the tools that we may already have can guide us to greater impact. Quality strategy, competencies, and skills will be the secret to our success. 

For more information contact www.nahq.org



**STEPHANIE MERCADO, CAE,
CPHQ**

STEPHANIE IS CEO AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR HEALTHCARE QUALITY. IN 2023, SHE RECEIVED ASSOCIATION FORUM'S SAMUEL B. SHAPIRO AWARD FOR CHIEF STAFF EXECUTIVE ACHIEVEMENT.

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This article is part of Association Forum's Healthcare Collaborative initiative. Healthcare Collaborative is made possible by the following supporters:

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From Employee to Changemaker:

How to Adopt an Intrapreneurial Mindset

By Alison Powers, MBA

Pursuing intrapreneurship in the nonprofit sector can be a rewarding experience for the individual and the organization.

Boosting organizational revenue and growth while making the most of in-house knowledge and talent are good business cases to give it a try. For the individual, embarking on intrapreneurial activity can increase morale and productivity, which is good for personal and professional growth. This article examines how to create an intrapreneurial mindset at your nonprofit.



What is intrapreneurship?

Over the last two decades, entrepreneurial activity by individuals and teams within organizations has received increased attention in the workplace. Virtually all organizations are now striving to increase innovation and proactive behavior to solve complex problems through internal entrepreneurial activity. Often called intrapreneurship, this innovative activity spurs new programs, innovation, and a renewed commitment to strategic goals to overcome the staleness that affects many organizations. In the nonprofit space, intrapreneurship is known for specific intentions and behaviors, such as risk-taking, innovativeness and proactiveness, at multiple levels, often tied to the organizational mission.

Who is intrapreneurship for?

Nonprofit organizations of all sizes and all industry spaces can benefit from creating an intrapreneurial mindset. Many observers maintain that nonprofit organizations must identify more effective and sustainable ways to address complex problems, including adopting more business-like methods and intrapreneurial practices. For many nonprofits, especially those in the healthcare space, it can often seem daunting to foster innovation in an environment that can be very political and where conflicting forces—such as healthcare and social services—oftentimes seem to work against each other unintentionally. While breaking through the bureaucratic layers takes patience and collaboration, it can be extremely rewarding. When you innovate within these complex systems, you can really make an impact on the community you serve.

How do you become an intrapreneur?

As an intrapreneur in the nonprofit space, you'll need a good dose of patience, trust from your manager, and financial resources. While you might love solving problems, don't rush into situations with solutions. Instead, try sitting with a question or problem for a while to avoid implementing sub-optimal solutions. At the same time, learn from setbacks to develop an all-important personal and professional skill – resilience – so that when something fails, you bounce back rather than getting discouraged or demoralized.

Manage expectations

Not only will fear of failure affect an intrapreneur, but it will also hinder managerial trust. According to a study by California State University on Intrapreneurship in Nonprofit Organizations, individuals undertaking activities involving risk-taking and the possibility of failure may believe that managerial trust will diminish if projects or activities do not meet established goals. To combat this, set yourself, your partners, and your project up for success by conversing with management before undertaking a project. Asking the all-important question – what does success look like for this project? – goes a long way toward managing expectations.

Create a business plan to secure financial support

For the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), staff start their journey into intrapreneurship with a business case. Presented to the financial team, projects that are

intrapreneurship is known for specific intentions and behaviors, such as risk-taking, innovativeness and proactiveness, at multiple levels, often tied to the organizational mission.





Working with diverse stakeholders means getting comfortable with leading or following, depending on the issue or audience.

ultimately approved are supported financially by the organization's Innovation Fund, a fund established to support innovative ideas.

AAP sets aside funds for projects that have potential but involve some risk. The project must be mission-focused, revenue must break even within three years, and it must have a positive margin by the fifth year. The positive margin is then used to pay back the Innovation Fund to support other innovative ideas. AAP knows that some of these projects will fail and some will succeed, so the successful ones fund the ones that did not work out and generate additional funds for future projects. After a payback period, the positive margin goes to the general AAP funds to fund operations.

One of the Academy's most successful projects is Healthy Children.org, a parenting website with information about the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), its many programs and activities, policies and guidelines, publications and other child health resources.

Currently, the Academy is working with the software company EPIC to develop an app to integrate the AAP's patient education module with MyChart. This would provide AAP resources and guidelines for patient care directly to electronic health records.

Does the narrative work?

In the nonprofit sector, success looks like mission-focused leadership. Where the for-profit sector might be motivated by market share, nonprofits focus on multiple measures of success that ultimately support their mission, which is usually tied to serving great numbers of the population.

Because the nonprofit sector is highly collaborative, with healthcare environments taking a particularly people-centric, bottom-up approach, innovation means empowering diverse stakeholders to develop ideas rather than imposing them from leadership. Working with diverse stakeholders means getting comfortable with leading or following, depending on the issue or audience. Adapting your style to the situation will make the experience smoother, better balanced, and probably a better outcome for your project.

Ultimately, for the nonprofit organization, success will look very collaborative. Successful nonprofits mobilize and inspire their staff to marry innovation and collaboration. For the individual, moving past the fear of failure to give yourself to a project and see it through will bring a renewed commitment to the organization's mission and a new set of skills and title: intrapreneur. [E](#)



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What Is Your Organization Doing Today to Plan for Tomorrow?

Associations provide immense value through education and professional development. With education, one area where associations can really prepare for the future involves leveraging fast-evolving technologies to create original, high-quality content efficiently. Generative AI technologies like ChatGPT, Bard, and Jasper, for example, help us convert one form of content, such as a webinar, into another, such as a job aid or blog article. This process allows us to present valuable information in different formats, broaden our audience reach within and beyond our membership, and crucially, save staff time for other creative and strategic endeavors.

“We are building an office culture that appeals to our future workforce. Our association has transitioned to a completely remote work environment with flexible hours, generous PTO, parental leave, and more. We have prioritized a diverse and inclusive team, mental health and wellness, and professional development for our staff. These internal changes have reflected outward, to our members-at-large and they have also attracted Millennial and Gen Z members.”

: **Jessica Struve, CAE**
: Deputy Executive Director, Radiology Business Management Association



“Generative AI technology is of particular interest to the information management and governance professionals that ARMA represents. As such, we are heavily focused on providing resources and content that help our mem-

bers understand the technology, how it impacts the way they work, and how they can best leverage now and the future. Everything from how we develop our conference sessions to webinar offerings to job aids and publications is focused on keeping our members informed about the direction of their profession and how they can be prepared for it.”

: **Erica Poff, PMP, CAE, IOM**
: Vice President of Education, ARMA International

“We’re leading by example and advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives embedded in the organizational culture and performance. We advise our Fortune 1000 corporations and other organizations on the emerging multicultural trends across the country with an emphasis on the rapid growth of the U.S. Hispanic segment. We leverage thought leadership, best practices, strategies, and resources to elevate talent, customers, suppliers, community relations, and employee resource group (ERG) initiatives.”

: **Eduardo Arabu, MSPPM, CDMP**
: Chief Executive Officer, National Hispanic Corporate Council



“I recently transitioned to a new organization, post-COVID-19, and have been pleasantly surprised by the commitment to a strong work-life balance. We’re encouraged to take PTO, participate in weekly staff walks and mindfulness and meditation coaching, and are required to be in the office just once a week. The Joint Commission is committed to whole-person wellness allowing me to realign my personal balance in a healthy way.”

: **Jen Swanson**
: Associate Director of Segment Marketing, The Joint Commission



WHAT IS YOUR ORGANIZATION DOING TODAY TO PLAN FOR TOMORROW?



“At ICMA, we are working to ensure our organization remains relevant to all local government professionals worldwide. This prepares us for the future as we are growing our network and developing globally-relevant products and services to help address today’s biggest challenges.”

• **Jeanette Gass**
• Senior Program Manager, Global Engagement, ICMA



“AI is evolving rapidly, affecting how members do business and how my associations operate. To stay ahead, we are regularly reviewing how the technology space is changing and integrating it into our strategic plans and operations.”

• **Sara L. Wood, MBA, CAE**
• Executive Director, North American Association of Commencement Officers and Public Media Business Association

“Association partnerships have always come in all shapes and sizes, and it’s time to add even more. The reality for association leaders is that sponsorships and partnerships cannot be one-size-fits all anymore. As decision-makers diversify and corporate partners’ goals evolve, we must have open conversations with our partners to create customized win-win-win scenarios for our associations, members, and partners. When considering the financial resources provided through these partnerships, it’s important to remember that companies aren’t looking to just give you money for special recognition anymore; they are looking to collaborate and invest in organizations and partnerships that can help them achieve their business goals and generate ROI—a metric likely measured differently by each company.”

• **Chris Beaman, CAE**
• Corporate Partnerships Officer, Sigma Foundation for Nursing



“Generative AI has the potential to revolutionize association membership models by offering unprecedented value to members. Drawing from SaaS business models, a new approach

to member value could provide differentiated value at each tier, flexibility, and organizational-level offerings. For example, an AI-powered digital assistant familiar with the entirety of an association’s content could offer basic access at the entry-level, with premium levels offering broader content access and advanced features. Inspired by Slack and other tiered pricing models, associations can offer AI services at different price points, accommodating diverse needs while opening new revenue streams.”

• **Amith Nagarajan**
• Chairman, Blue Cypress



“As the Corporate Housing Providers Association (CHPA) looks ahead, we are thinking about the purpose of our events, how we support the attendees, and ultimately how to increase the ROI while meeting the strategic needs of the association. We realize that not every event suits every audience, but holistically we have the ability to provide value for all our member and non-member audiences. We’re also quickly realizing that in order to increase the ROI and overall attendee experience, we are going to have to explore expanded revenue streams to increase our ability to deliver these enhanced experiences.”

• **Nick Estrada, CAE, CMP**
• Deputy CEO, Corporate Housing Providers Association

By Jonathan Adams, CAE

Tackle Tomorrow by Focusing on the Right Now

Delving into this issue's thought-provoking theme, "Tomorrow is Now", a simple yet profound truth resonates with me: To build a better future, start small and start now.

Whether envisioning your own future or charting the course for your organization, incremental changes today pave the path to a successful and transformative tomorrow.

As association professionals, our hearts and minds are dedicated to driving positive change. Change is ubiquitous within an association: new and re-imagined programs and services, advocacy efforts, bylaw changes, operating plans and much more.

However, when discussing change within an expansive context—such as disruptive innovation, digital transformation, strategic plans and cultural shifts—it becomes alarmingly convenient to postpone change until a future date. Common refrains might include:

- "Let's wait for the new software system implementation before tackling that issue."
- "That's an important concern for our members. We'll incorporate it into next year's strategic plan."

At the Water Quality Association, we consistently ask, "What can we do right now?" In 2021, aware that the following year would likely see a complete transition to new AMS, LMS and website platforms, we implemented many small improvements that were impactful immediately:

- Refining back-office menus and views in the outgoing AMS
- Making small adjustments to our website navigation to be more audience focused
- Refreshing some key content ahead of our formal, 500-plus-page, content audit.

These and other minor adjustments allowed us to address both member and staff immediate needs rather than leaving them hanging until the new system was ready. This approach prevented a larger-than-necessary pile-up of unresolved issues and ensured that we didn't expect our new platforms and vendors to be a magic 'fix-all' solution.

Personal transformation is no different. Reflecting on your own journey, you're likely to see substantial evolution: changes in personal habits, career progression or transitions, adaptation to remote work, skill enhancement and other noteworthy achievements. Yet, it's tempting to put personal growth on hold for some future 'ideal' moment. We've all said, "I'll start this personal or professional goal...once work dies down," or "after I earn my CAE," or "after I finish [insert project]".

When discussing change within an expansive context—such as disruptive innovation, digital transformation, strategic plans and cultural shifts—it becomes alarmingly convenient to postpone change until a future date.

If you seek profound change in your future or the future of your organization, remember, the best place to start is here, and the best time to start is now.

Small, steady changes have led me to remarkable growth, both personally and professionally. I started as a very introverted IT professional who would retreat to my hotel room immediately after the day's last conference session. Now, I am a confident, albeit still introverted, association executive who enjoys networking, speaking engagements, volunteering and even writing magazine articles like this one.

Here are a few of the small changes I've made along my journey:

- Stopping myself from bolting when I walk into a networking event where I didn't know a single person.
- Creating a vision board to bring clarity, focus and manifestation to my goals.
- Setting aside time each day to reflect on something I'm grateful for.
- Going for short walks each morning.

Each of these small steps was born out of a single question: "What can I do right now?" These small, incremental steps have created a domino effect in my life, opening avenues and opportunities that seemed inaccessible just a



JONATHAN AND HIS FAMILY

few years ago. If you seek profound change in your future or the future of your organization, remember, the best place to start is here, and the best time to start is now.

In the words of former President Barack Obama, "Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek." [F](#)

What change can you make today?

JONATHAN ADAMS, CAE

JONATHAN IS THE VP OF INNOVATION FOR THE WATER QUALITY ASSOCIATION. IN 2022, HE WAS RECOGNIZED AS A DELP SCHOLAR BY ASAE AND FORTY UNDER 40 HONOREE BY THE ASSOCIATION FORUM.

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