

Conferences, Meetings & Events

PCAAE: 30 June 2015

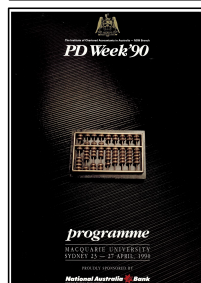
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Quarter century of running events



The importance of associations

- Associations exist to support a profession or industry
- Associations are run by members, for the members
- Volunteers are motivated by helping the profession or industry, not to help their own career or wealth or ego
- Associations are ways that senior leaders can give back to their profession or industry by volunteer service
- Associations honour their senior leaders, and senior leaders donate time and knowledge to assist younger participants



Position your association at the center of the industry or profession

- Associations volunteers are willing to share knowledge openly for the benefit of the industry or profession
- Associations are neutral forums where business competitors can meet without sharing secrets
- Associations should not allow collusion and price fixing which lessens open competition
- Associations must be appealing to join and to renew membership
- Research into why people join is required, and recruitment and retention techniques needed



10 thoughts on association events

1. Position conference as the annual pinnacle of the association – “you must be there”
2. Profitability is important – ask about this
3. Meetings, Conferences & Exhibitions are invaluable in member engagement and reputation (what of “Incentives?”)
4. Leadership is shown by the association
5. People like recognition & acknowledgement



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10 thoughts on association events

6. Content matters!
7. Inspiring speakers may not be expensive
8. Delegates and speakers appreciate professionalism in preparation, information and good food!
9. Celebrate and party - in a responsible way
10. “PCOs” may have a key role to make association conferences a must-attend event



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Events are (usually) most profitable activity of an association

- Membership fee income varies hugely:
 - 500 members x \$100 per year = \$50,000
 - 10,000 members x \$1,000 per year = \$10,000,000
- Conferences bring in (1) registration fees and (2) trade exhibition fees
- Often profits from the major conference carry the association all year: *website, lobbying, magazine, standards, research, Board, etc*



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Eternal need for association events

- Associations are all about associating with people with common interests
- Competitive companies will share some things
- Non-competitors (eg lawyers in different cities) share many things
 - Technical education and knowledge
 - Industry practicalities
 - Inspiration and motivation



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It's all about education & information

- Some professions are more academic and want to learn and things change rapidly
 - Hence medical events biggest associations field
- Practical people want to learn practical things
 - Best to discuss with someone else in same space
- Mandatory "CPD" by association or regulator
 - This a rule that supports a habit
- Association events will always occur ☺



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How do these events occur?

- Logistics, timing and smooth management
 - Associations may do this in-house ☺
- Technical topic and speaker knowledge will usually be known by members/committee
 - Good to be PCO with technical knowledge ☺
- Marketing is usually direct marketing from the association
 - PCO who can assist with delegate boosting ☺



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Who in the association decides?

- Varies from association to association:
 - Chairman of Board/President
 - Board of Directors
 - Sub-Committee of Board
 - CEO
 - Senior Manager responsible for conferences
 - Agreed policy of rotation
- Make yourself a wise source of advice



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Associations are ideal organisers of meetings and conferences

- Associations provide knowledge, communications and networking
- People wish to share and learn together, events are the main activity of associations
- And well-run larger events make profits!
- Volunteer members of associations understand their specialist topic areas
- Presenters will be advantaged by being seen by their peers as being intelligent, willing to share and humble



Association events range from small to very large

- Associations need to run a range of events starting from a two-hour "Member Meeting" with only one presenter
- Training and instruction is conducted at half-day or one-day "Workshops"
- Associations can run one-day "Conferences" with multiple presenters
- The highlight of an association is running a "International Congress", to welcome international colleagues to The Philippines and to showcase the excellence and knowledge of the nation



International Congresses

- When associations have experience with popular topics and good speakers, they can be more ambitious
- Associations need to bid to run world events because they are motivating for people involved
- Make your associations conference the "must-attend" event: eg "the Olympics of Accountants"
- Having a strong national association will assist bids for World Congresses
- Associations can take advantage of the global interest in the potential and current growth of The Philippines



Trade Exhibitions, Awards and Golf Days

- Members like to meet suppliers in one place at one time
- Trade exhibitions are time effective for association members who buy and businesses that sell goods and services
- For the association, exhibitions can be very profitable
- If your association doesn't run an exhibition, someone will!
- Awards programs are also popular with sponsors, hence profitable
- Hollywood's "Academy Awards/Oscars" are run by an association
- Consider running other special events, including golf days and networking



Events can be connected to Industry or Profession Standards

- It is good for the association to set and enforce standards instead of a government department
- Public interest needs to be considered in standards, not personal interest
- Code of Conduct and Ethics is a basic standard
- Disciplinary procedures are required for fairness
- Post-graduate "accreditation" programs (eg CPA) will be popular if they increase income and reputation for accredited people or businesses
- Require accredited members to gain "continuing professional development" points, and offer relevant sessions at events



Use your members to decide on topics and make presentations

- Associations are run for members by members who understand relevant content and topics
- Members want to receive technical and practical knowledge
- Theory is useful, but applying theory to practical situations is more important
- Case studies and exercises are excellent ways to explain knowledge



Discussion on Meetings & Events

1. Are events successful for your association? (If so, why and if not, why not?)
2. What are the success stories or disappointments from your meetings and events?
3. As a delegate, what are the things you like most about attending an association event, or what do you like the least?
4. What can your association do to generate greater profits for your association? (eg more events, better content, higher prices, greater lead time, more marketing and sales?)



Use various delivery methods

- Increasing use of e-learning and webinars, but old-fashioned meetings will continue
- Conferences often commence with an important and famous keynote speaker
- Keynote speakers are good at attracting delegates to register
- However, practical knowledge is usually gained in other sessions
- Panel sessions are excellent, where the chairman and three experts talk together with no Powerpoint presentations
- Panel presentations have a pre-prepared script of what questions are asked to who and at what time



Comments about presenters

- Some experts may be good technically but bad presenters
- Many presenters give too much information rather than less and more relevant knowledge
- Good presenters engage with the audience early and ask them questions
- Good presenters invite questions at any time during the presentation
- Bad presenters give long, detailed and boring backgrounds to situations
- Good presenters assume that the audience has some knowledge and get to the point
- Good presenters use half the time for sharing knowledge and half the time to interact with the delegates and answer questions



More interaction, more regular practitioners and less experts

- Delegates don't want to hear always from experts
- They also want to hear from regular practitioners
- Delegates enjoy a few unstructured and interactive sessions
- Have some sessions where delegates talk together in small groups
- Get delegates to work on exercises or small projects together
- Survey members beforehand about preferred topics and speakers
- Remember that "call for papers" may not result in quality speakers
- Have 45 minute coffee breaks and 60 minutes lunch



Associations must aim for paid staff

- Volunteers are usually specialists in their field, but are busy
- Therefore, associations must employ staff to arrange conferences and events
- Volunteers are used for technical knowledge and speaker suggestions
- However, invitations must always be issued and chased up by staff
- Volunteers are often too busy to do things related to a conference
- Therefore, use volunteers for their knowledge and contacts only



Teamwork in associations is successful

- Overall governing committees of associations are required
- Conference organising sub-committees are also required
- Holding a committee or sub-committee meeting is a time that decisions will be made and things will happen
- Volunteers are more likely to do things when they commit to doing something in front of their colleagues
- Working on a committee or sub-committee is motivating as ideas are shared
- Committees and sub-committees ensure more people share the workload



Marketing your events

- Members expect to see an annual program of events every year
- Associations usually market by direct email, so a database of members and their email addresses is crucial
- Give people advance notice of topic, content, speaker, venue, date, timing and price
- National conferences need 12 months notice of date, and 4 months notice of detailed content
- International congresses need 24 months notice of date, and 6 months notice of detailed content



Sponsors at conferences

- Sponsors are an important source of income
- Delegates are happy to meet suppliers at a trade exhibition, but they don't want to attend a technical session that is a sales talk
- Sponsors will always wish to make presentations, and think it is a favour to delegates
- But sponsors will always sell – and always annoy delegates
- A good compromise is for suppliers to sponsor sessions where clients of sponsors are speakers



Build your association for the long term

- Understand that your events will increase in number and profitability
- Hire association staff to manage the association and do the event organising
- Use members to give input on topics and speakers, but not to issue invitations and arrange logistics
- Establish systems and write down procedures
- Investments in how to run a conference will be repaid in future successes ☺



Thank you!

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