

# Emulating remarkable associations

There are three commitments and seven measures of successful associations. This is based on the bestselling classic, *7 Measures of Success: What Remarkable Associations Do that Others Don't*, published by the Washington, D.C.-based American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), to which I am a long-standing member and a content task force member of its annual Asia-Pacific Great Ideas in Association Management Conference.

Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great* and *Built to Last*, wrote: “Associations are the hidden glue of our society and economy.” Based on this premise, *7 Measures* puts together four years of intensive original research and a 15-year analysis of data, and concludes with these commitments and measures:

## **Commitment to purpose**

- A customer-service culture—An approach that says “we are here to serve you” is built into the organizational structure and processes.
- Alignment of products and services with mission—Offerings are consistent with the organization’s mission, which remains central and unchanging even in the midst of changes in the external environment.

## **Commitment to analysis and feedback**

- Data-driven strategies—The organization not only gathers and analyzes information, but also has effective processes for taking action based on what it has learned.
- Dialogue and engagement—An internal conversation continually occurs among staff, board and members about the association’s direction and priorities.
- The CEO as broker of ideas—The chief association executive facilitates visionary thinking throughout the organization.

## **Commitment to Action**

- Organizational adaptability—Remarkable associations learn from and respond to change. Although willing to change, they also know what not to change.
- Alliance building—Associations that are secure and confident in their own right seek partners and projects that complement their purpose and mission.

In my very first column, “Confessions from an Association Man: Part 1” published on July 6, 2016, I told the story on how clueless I was 25 years ago when I accidentally entered the association executive profession coming from an engineering background and a budding development banking career. As things turned out at the time, my first instinct was to join ASAE as a member, which then opened my heart and mind into the world of association governance and management.

Today, I consider myself as an experienced association executive.

However, I’m still learning, and I have been faithfully following to the letter the findings of these *7 Measures*, which, I would like to believe, made good results for me and my association. I hope these measures will help you, too, in making your association successful and sustainable!