



CASE STUDY

SHIFTING CULTURE FROM EXCLUSIVE TO INCLUSIVE FOR CONFERENCE SUCCESS

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For the National Association for Professional Organizers (NAPO), conference evaluation feedback routinely highlighted that attendees perceived a cliquy and exclusive feel when reviewing the conference program, pointing out it provided receptions and special events for select groups of members.

The Solution

NAPO set out to create a more inclusive atmosphere. To accomplish this, board members created a greeting line at each general session during the annual conference to welcome all attendees as they entered, instead of clustering off with long-time friends. The NAPO headquarters team wore NAPO embroidered sweaters with their names at the annual conference. The goal was to have attendees easily identify team members who could provide assistance when needed.

Also, in advance of the annual conference, each board member selected a member with leadership potential with whom he or she could engage at the conference. Board members targeted members who were not currently volunteering on a committee or task force. Additionally, NAPO publicized and invited attendees to sign-up for five unique one-hour focus group discussions that were tied directly to the strategic issues that the board would be discussing at the upcoming annual strategic planning session.

NAPO also created a NAPO Trends Wall near the registration desk at NAPO2015 to encourage attendee engagement and feedback on industry or global trends that they anticipate could have an impact to the way professional organizers deliver services to their clients.

The Outcome

All the initiatives were a success! The board greeting line at all general member sessions created an environment where every attendee was felt to be important. Both the board and headquarters teams greeted members by first names and high-fives and cheering soon became the norm. Attendees were soon able to identify the face of every board member. The NAPO headquarters' team sweaters elevated the awareness of the faces behind voices that many members have talked to throughout the year. In addition, the team uniform shifted the perception that the headquarters team wasn't available or willing to listen to member feedback throughout the conference.



Board members made personal contact with over 30 new potential volunteer recruits who appreciated the personal outreach by a peer and volunteer leader of NAPO. The five focus groups enabled members to feel that their opinions counted and their concerns were heard.

The trends allowed for members to better appreciate that the NAPO board was focused on both today's issues and long-term global trends that could or would have an impact to the manner in which NAPO delivers services in the future. There was also an infographic from the 2014 Industry Survey, sponsored by DeClutter. As attendees passed they stopped to look at the wall and by day three it was completely full of trends in the organizing industry.

By reframing responses to member and volunteer requests, the NAPO headquarters team was able to provide budget-friendly options to satisfy the needs relevant to the request.





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