

COVID-19 resources for associations

A collection of resources published by Association Headquarters' experts in meetings, marketing, membership, and association management **during the COVID-19 pandemic**



ASSOCIATION
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This eBook is a collection of previously published content from the Association Headquarters website.

As many other organizations, the content strategy for AH shifted when COVID-19 affected how business was being conducted. Associations were looking for guidance on how to pivot their in-person meetings, their membership communications, educational opportunities, marketing messaging, and so much more. As rapidly as the pivot happened, the experts at AH documented what was working for them and their associations to share with the industry through blogs and case studies.

This eBook is a collection of AH original content, packaged together for easy accessibility.

Using ASAE ForesightWorks to Manage the COVID-19 Crisis and Conference Plans

Tools for Association Leaders Managing COVID-19 Crisis and Annual Conference Plans

Seemingly overnight, the COVID-19 public health crisis has dramatically impacted our reality in unanticipated ways. This crisis has been transformative without much warning. It is no doubt that the quarantine orders have affected annual conference plans for at least the next few months; I suspect that the most intuitive, effective leaders are already thinking and planning for future impacts resulting from this crisis.

Figure 2. Foresight Applications for Associations



It may benefit your organization to have a discussion on how the crisis is impacting the future of some of your big strategic initiatives. This is a great way to get acquainted, or reacquainted, with the ASAE ForesightWorks drivers of change.

ForesightWorks identifies four purposes why associations should embrace foresight (see Figure 2 from ASAE). One, in particular, is very relevant in the current landscape

-Number 2- Risk Analysis:

Risk Analysis

You probably monitor political and legal changes that could affect your association or industry, but are you also identifying future risks to your association's business model, your programs, and other operational factors? The greatest risk for leaders may be in refusing to acknowledge and plan for important and predictable changes. While advocacy and membership staff are likely accustomed to scanning for potential risks related to their work, key participants in foresight-informed risk analysis also include leaders in finance, business operations, information technology, and communications functions — where urgent threats are likely to emerge. Considering the ASAE ForesightWorks drivers of change will help staff leaders examine potential risks and identify potential action steps, enabling executives to take thoughtful and actionable recommendations to the board. Ultimately, association executives will need to draw their boards and key committees into developing and enacting the steps required to mitigate future risk. Not only is it part of their fiduciary responsibility to protect the association's future, but volunteer leaders will need to make informed decisions when approving significant budget changes or taking the association's business model in new directions.

While association leaders are now preoccupied in navigating force majeure contract clauses and cash flow issues like never before, it might be the most appropriate time to consider a discussion around ForesightWorks. A discussion around the impacts of this crisis can invoke strong opinions, especially if we all have diverse political opinions. Using the foresight filter can be an effective way of facilitating a discussion around shifting strategic

priorities, changing program expenditures, etc. It can also help when doing scenario planning that might seem gloomy. By identifying a few relevant drivers of change, association leaders can more easily identify risks and start imagining opportunities despite the uncertain. As a starting point, consider the six clusters of “Drivers of Change” that ForesightWorks identifies:

- Data & Technology
- Content, Learning, and Knowledge
- Demographics and Membership
- Economic Conditions
- Society and Politics
- Workforce and Workplace

Think of the ways the current crisis might impact your organization in these six clusters. Consider these questions as sample starting points in considering threats and opportunities:

- How will the economic impact of the crisis impact members’ professions and/or businesses?
- How will the demand for members’ services change if people’s disposable income changes?
- How can my organization position itself as a go-to resource for media content?

Practicing foresight is above all about being

prepared for what could happen. Although no amount of foresight could have prepared us for the events that have transpired and continue to unfold, association leaders can still use the ForesightWorks research to inform their response to immediate and future impacts by seeing this unprecedented event as an opportunity to be of most value to members rather than a catastrophe that threatens their very existence.

start the discussion here

What might your organization look like one month from now? 6 months from now? Then confirm a group consensus on how the organization will approach moving forward.

STATUS QUO
No real change

INCREMENTAL
Small adjustments

TRANSFORMATIVE
Radical change



Supporting Association Members During the COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID Management for Association Members and Professionals

We all have questions related to COVID-19 — When will it be safe to go to the store without a face covering? Will our children go back to school this academic year? Will Zoom happy hours become the new normal for how we spend time with our friends and family? While we may not have answers to *these* questions, we can help ease some of the concern for our members and support them with information related to operating their businesses during these uncertain times.

The National Air Duct Cleaners Association (NADCA), one of AH's client partners, is doing just that. They dedicated a section of their website with up-to-date COVID-19 information so members could easily stay informed with how the pandemic is affecting their industry and the way they run their businesses. NADCA's mission is to support its members' success — and that doesn't stop during a global pandemic.

TIPS FOR CREATING A COVID-19 ONLINE RESOURCE CENTER

- 1. Make it easy to find.** Create a dedicated page within your association's website to be the center hub for all information related to COVID-19. Make it easy to access and navigate. Consider adding it to your website's main toolbar or create a slider image on the homepage.
- 2. Stick to the facts.** If you're sharing information from other sources (state and federal governments, the CDC, etc.) link directly to those websites. Avoid linking to information from other sites, including social media. This will help ensure that you're providing your members with what they need to know without making them sift through the noise.
- 3. Keep it updated and make it relevant.** As new information becomes available and restrictions are put in place or lifted, keep your members informed. If it's not relevant to their industry, leave it out.

*Consider adding a **COVID-19 Online Resource Center** to your website's main toolbar or create a slider image on the homepage.*



4. Develop an FAQ. By now, you've probably received at least a few questions related to COVID-19 from your members. Create an FAQ document and add it to your resource page. Anticipate some of the questions your members might have but aren't asking.

The screenshot shows the NADCA website's "COVID-19 Resources and Information" page. The page features a navigation bar with links to BENEFITS OF HVAC CLEANING, MEMBERSHIP, CERTIFICATION, EDUCATION, EVENTS, RESOURCES, and ABOUT. The main content area lists several resources:

- OSHA Provides Supplemental Guidance for HVAC and Related Industries** (Posted on August 27, 2020): This update provides guidance for in-home repair services workers, such as those providing plumbing, electrical, or heating/air conditioning/ventilation installation and repair. This guidance supplements the ...
- Building Reopening Preparation for Facility Managers** (Posted on June 11, 2020): Dear Facility Managers, Now more than ever, indoor air quality is a primary concern for building occupants. As facilities begin to reopen and buildings become reoccupied, consideration should be given to HVAC assessment, cleaning and maintenance to...
- Pandemic Safety Program & Other Tools for Reopening** (Posted on June 10, 2020): Dear NADCA member, As we continue to navigate the new normal in each of our respective states, it's important that we keep in mind the safety of our employees and customers. A fellow NADCA member who also serves as an instructor for OSHA, has shared the...
- Allied Industry Partners: The truth about COVID-19 (Webinar)** (Posted on April 28, 2020): The Allied Industry Partners (AIP) presents an informative discussion covering COVID-19. The presentation reviews how the disease is spread, addresses environmental disinfection and testing, and what you need to know to run your business in this...
- NADCA COVID-19 FAQ** (Posted on April 20, 2020): Dear NADCA Members, Please see below for answers to some of the frequently asked questions we've received in response to COVID-19. 1. Is air duct/HVAC system cleaning effective in mitigating COVID-19? We continue to learn more each day regarding how...
- COVID-19 Stimulus Package** (Posted on April 1, 2020): What Does the Stimulus Package Mean For NADCA Members? The \$2 trillion stimulus package, negotiated by Republican and Democratic leaders, is the largest economic stimulus measure in modern history. The bill is a \$2 trillion combination of tax provisions...
- URGENT - PPE Needed!** (Posted on March 25, 2020): A dangerous shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) is crippling health care workers' ability to treat our sick and is risking the health of the doctors and nurses fighting on the front lines of this crisis. Masks, N95 respirators, gloves, and...
- NADCA, RIA, IICRC: Essential Business Joint Statement** (Posted on March 21, 2020): To Federal, State, and Local Officials: Tens of thousands of dedicated professionals in America's HVAC, air duct cleaning and surface cleaning/disaster restoration and indoor air quality industries provide essential services that are necessary to...
- COVID-19: Important Information Regarding Chemical Product Applications in HVAC Systems** (Posted on March 19, 2020): COVID-19: Important Information Regarding Chemical Product Applications in HVAC Systems Due to the spread of COVID-19, NADCA anticipates a greater consumer demand for NADCA members to "sanitize" or "disinfect" HVAC systems. Numerous...
- NOTICE: Kryterion Testing Center Closures Due to COVID-19** (Posted on March 18, 2020): NOTICE: Kryterion Testing Center Closures Due to COVID-19 To protect the health and safety of test candidates, proctors and staff during the current COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, many Kryterion testing centers have decided to...

At the bottom of the page, there is a pagination bar showing "first", "previous", "1", "2", and "3", with "3" being the active page.

5. Do the heavy lifting. Whether or not a person or an industry falls into the "essential worker" category varies from state to state. In response to this, NADCA staff contacted governors of all 50 states, lobbying for air duct cleaning to be deemed an essential business operation. While advocating is critical, NADCA also encouraged its members to take action by contacting their local and state officials. To make this task a little less daunting, NADCA provided members with template letters that could be downloaded from the resource center.

Once developed, direct your members to the online resource center and encourage them to check back frequently for new updates. Alert them of updates through your email communications and your association's social media channels.



What to Think About When Marketing a Non-COVID-19 Message

Checklist for Marketing Professionals to Use When Creating Non-COVID Messages Including Marketing Examples

YOUR ASSOCIATION'S BIG NEWS DOESN'T HAVE TO WAIT

From annual conferences to networking events, in-person meetings, and more, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed a lot about how associations connect with their members and audiences. Now, as crisis communications give way to a new normal, associations are looking to understand how to market services and initiatives without striking the wrong social chord.

MINDFUL COMMUNICATIONS

In a [previous article](#), AH discussed the importance of understanding that association audiences — that is, members, prospects, industry partners, and others — have shifting priorities and interests amid the current circumstances.

Sarah Black, AH's director of content and creative, reminds associations that members are potentially dealing with life-changing issues affecting their jobs and families. "There are going to be people for whom focusing on anything other than navigating COVID-19 isn't possible — or of interest," Black said. "But there are also going to be people who are looking for communications and opportunities right now. Those are the people we don't want to let down by going dark."

While communications can and should continue, when it comes to marketing, mindfulness is key. "It's imperative that association marketers are sensitive to this time and aware of where their audience's attention is," said Karli Horn, AH's corporate marketing manager. "You may not have their full attention, which means they're not fully comprehending your message."

Rather than demand your audience's potentially limited attention, or compromise the impact of your marketing, consider a more modest approach to marketing communications that's appropriate for both the audience and the event.

TAILORED MESSAGING DIFFERS BY AUDIENCE

AH recently had to carefully weigh the launch of its new brand and website, which coincided with the national emergency declaration and COVID-19 closures rippling across America. It was determined that a full launch of the new brand and website would be postponed.

"We have this exciting launch that many people had been working toward for months and stakeholders who were looking for the launch," said Sabina Gargiulo, AH's vice president of industry relations and marketing. "So, much like our client partners having to pivot to virtual events or change plans drastically, we had to be nimble and open to changing our plans to something more appropriate for the time." AH's approach involved highly personalized messaging to an internal audience with later plans for a full-scale brand and website launch.

The strategy behind the soft launch was two-fold: to connect with an engaged internal audience that was anticipating and looking for communication about the launch, while also maintaining mindful communications that align with the social climate. Associations seeking to market new programs and initiatives may follow suit.

Gargiulo notes that a customized approach, specifically segmented for different targeted audiences, is a vital marketing tactic. "Associations' marketing messaging to their audiences needs to look much more personalized and tailored to fit the audience," said Gargiulo.



This is increasingly being accomplished through **persona-based marketing**, a marketing philosophy AH develops and implements for its client partners.

“We’ve been doing more work to help client partners clearly identify who their audiences are,” Gargiulo said. “Then we create personas for those audiences, which inform content development and other marketing messaging.”

According to Black, personas are particularly valuable for crafting marketing messaging that resonates with target audiences. “It’s one thing to know your audience, but knowing the concerns, challenges, and opportunities of the people making up that audience helps you create messaging that’s that much closer to bulls eye,” says Black. “It feels personal. It feels relevant. Most important, it’s the message they want to receive from you. With everything that’s going on now, we can’t afford to be sending the wrong message.”

UP THE SOCIAL ANTE

Any kind of social emergency sends people online with increased frequency looking for information and updates. This kind of traffic represents an opportunity for associations to experiment with marketing tactics they may not have otherwise employed. “For a lot of associations, this is their chance to really shine,” Gargiulo said. “This is an opportunity for them to really think a bit more out of the box and maybe get very strategic while asking, ‘what do our members need from us right now?’”

Paid social media posts, like Facebook Ads, offer a way for associations to create highly targeted messaging and deliver it to a very specific audience. Paid social advertising allows marketers to specify geographic location, employer, job title, age, gender, and more as ways to filter messaging to select audiences.

“AH’s client partners are increasingly utilizing paid social media advertising campaigns as we’re navigating COVID-19,” Gargiulo said. “When you’re running a paid social campaign, you can get incredibly granular in terms of who sees your ad, and that kind of control is appreciated, especially now, to ensure that only the appropriate audience gets that communication.”

REFRAMING THE MESSAGING

Traditional marketing messaging needs a new angle to resonate with audiences right now. Horn recommends shifting to a message that promotes associations’ programs or initiatives within the context of COVID-19 closures.

“Members and prospects already understand that webinars and on-demand learning can be done from home,” says Horn. “A more effective message might be ‘now is the time to invest in yourself.’ It’s positive and encouraging, and acknowledges that right now, things are different.” That acknowledgement may mean the difference between your marketing connecting with your audience or being perceived as disconnected from their reality.

Another tactic Black recommends is anticipating your audience’s concerns or objections, especially around event marketing. “Promoting in-person events in the far future isn’t taboo, but we still do not know how long stay-at-home orders and travel restrictions will continue, so associations should have a plan B ready and communicate that from the start,” said Black. “Let attendees know what the plan is if the event has to be canceled; what will happen to their registration? Will it be applied to a virtual event, or maybe to the following year’s registration? That knowledge can go a long way.”

Black also recommends that associations shift messaging to a more patient tone. “Instead of trying to get members’ attention, we’re shifting to a mentality of ‘we’re here when you need us,’” she said.

A NEW WAY TO NETWORK

It’s time for association communicators to leverage their networks to get their messages out in a more thoughtful way. “Sharing exciting news with a smaller, more focused audience that will have the highest interest in that announcement means that only the people who want that message will get it,” said Horn. In addition, they can serve as ambassadors of the message, pushing it out to their networks when they deem appropriate.

“It can be hard to sit on big news for an extended period of time, so a soft launch might be the right answer for your big



news,” said Horn. AH decided to launch its new website and brand only to internal stakeholders, but that internal launch was just as much about strategy as it was tact. “We launched to AH’s internal network and let them do the talking for us,” said Horn.

While marketing events, services, and initiatives to association audiences continues to be necessary, the COVID-19 pandemic requires a softer, more thoughtful touch. Mindful, tailored communications with the right tone will resonate with target audiences more effectively and ultimately help your association marketing succeed during a difficult time.

Making the Switch from In-Person to Digital Meetings

First-Hand Experiences of Digital Event Transition from Association Meeting and Event Planners

AH's meeting and event planners are making the swift pivot from planning in-person meetings to now creating virtual experiences for their associations and credentialing bodies in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

They talk about their experiences and what's changing.



The best thing about going virtual with our event is ... making our event available to more people. Those who have never been to our conference or wouldn't have been able to come this year can now participate!

We choose to go virtual over rescheduling the in-person event because ... while we all hope to be out of quarantine soon, we don't know what the new normal will look like and for our members — nurses — we don't know if or when they will be able to travel.

The hardest thing to replicate in a virtual environment will be ... the fun and networking! While we are working hard to include gamification and chat rooms, there is no replacement for in-person networking, idea sharing, and enjoying a drink together.



The hardest thing to replicate in a virtual environment is ... the social networking and face-to-face interactions.

The best thing about going virtual with our event was ... it safely allowed our participants the ability to capture attention for their brand, products/services, and the innovations that would have been featured at the in-person show.

The experience is changing meeting planning by ... removing limitations on attendance numbers, travel costs, and overall expense.



We chose to go virtual over rescheduling the in-person event because ... we wanted to continue to provide a sense of community along with the amazing content provided at our meetings. We felt we could provide the same service virtually and did not want to wait until we could all meet in person.

The hardest thing to replicate in a virtual environment was/will be ... the strong networking opportunities we usually host at our in-person meetings.

The best thing about going virtual with our event is ... we can now open up our Regional Workshop to our global audience!



The hardest thing to replicate in a virtual environment will be ... creating networking opportunities. We are managing this challenge by creating different forms of interaction that are topic driven and non-topic driven for more “spur of the moment” conversation.

The best thing about going virtual with our event is ... providing year-round access to sessions and more than three times the amount of education credits than in-person. Our reach has expanded to a much larger audience.

This experience is changing meeting planning by ... creating new ways of interacting and delivering education.



The hardest thing to replicate in a virtual environment was ... a sense of inclusion. Earlier this year we offered a virtual attendance option for first time as a live stream in conjunction with our in-person annual Symposium. We specifically welcomed and acknowledged the virtual audience during sessions and answered their questions during the Q&A portion of sessions during the live event via a designated Virtual Event Moderator.

The best thing about going virtual with our event is ... that it provided those who normally wouldn't be able to attend the in-person event an opportunity to experience the high-caliber education and idea-sharing that takes place at the live CCMC's New World Symposium. Incorporating a virtual component helps remove some of the barriers to attendance at an in-person event and widens our reach, which ultimately furthers our goal of developing a well-prepared case management workforce.

This experience is changing meeting planning by ... expanding the skills we have in our planner toolboxes. The more we do to understand the elements of creating meaningful virtual events and how best to adapt those elements to fit our association's needs, the better able we are to help provide valuable education, resources, and opportunities to members and certificants.



Strategic Foresight for Associations

How Association Leaders Expect to Grow and Thrive in the Wake of COVID-19

As we move into a post-COVID-19 world, associations must once again be nimble and adjust to change in real-time. Navigating such significant change can be a challenge for any organization, but recent tools have been developed to help guide the way. *ASAE ForesightWorks*, powered by ASAE Foundation research, is a “deliberate, evidence-based research initiative and emerging line of products designed to be your partner in environmental scanning and planning for change,” is a significant development.

AH’s forthcoming *Foresight Toolkit*, leverages this valuable research to help associations operationalize the practice of strategic foresight methods by embracing forward-thinking as a daily function. This ability to anticipate the disruptive impact of societal transformations like the COVID-19 pandemic will increase the velocity of problem resolution and ensure that associations keep pace with the rapidly changing world around them.

Associations play a big critical role in the COVID-19 pandemic response, from interpreting the impact, helping their members pivot and then preparing a response plan for future crisis. Starting that dialogue on how opportunities emerge out of disruption, six of AH’s association leaders shared their foresight and planning processes into how the COVID-19 pandemic will shape the near- and long-term, and how associations will thrive in the wake of these challenging times. Foresight analysis and strategic planning minimize imminent negative impacts, and incorporating a planning process in looking forward negates similar consequences that may arise in the distant future.

AN EMPHASIS ON TECHNOLOGY

Associations are no strangers to connecting people virtually. However, Nicolette Zuecca, Chief Staff Executive for the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses (WOCN) Society, uses foresight to predict that the need for

more comprehensive remote learning opportunities will lead to more emphasis on emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and simulated learning experiences incorporating augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR).

ASAE ForesightWorks Driver of Change: Data and Technology • Action Brief: Anticipatory Intelligence

EVOLUTION OF EXAM DELIVERY

Vivian Campagna, Chief Industry Relations Officer for the Commission for Case Manager Certification (CCMC), predicts a radical transformation in exam delivery. For years the certification community has debated the efficacy of proctoring exams remotely without compromising their accreditation. In the past few weeks many of the obstacles have been lifted. To be determined is how potential security issues will be addressed in the short-term during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the long-term as the world fully opens back up after closures. These variables attest to the importance of strategic decision-making.

ASAE Foresightworks Driver of Change: Data and Technology • Action Brief: Fraying Cybersecurity

EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE IN THE WORKPLACE

Fortunately, the aftermath of the pandemic has a positive impact on some industries according to some foresight analyses. As commercial businesses start to develop new ways to live with a new COVID normal, Michele Buggy, Executive Director for the Indoor Air Quality Association (IAQA), expects to see a surge in positive growth as commercial businesses examine and deploy the latest technologies and methods to ensure that their indoor air quality is top notch. As COVID-19 cases become linked to the reopening of public spaces such as restaurants, schools, medical facilities and residential apartment buildings, increased discussion and awareness of the



importance of indoor air quality will create new employment opportunities for association members.

ASAE ForesightWorks Driver of Change: Content, Learning and Knowledge • Action Briefs: Shifting Environment for Content

ASAE ForesightWorks Driver of Change: Workforce and Workplace • Action Brief: New Forms of Work

Changing Face of Membership

Associations should be on the lookout for younger generations to join their associations and explore how older generations acclimate to a new normal after COVID-19. Elizabeth Franks, Executive Director for the American Needlepoint Guild (ANG), predicts a potential surge of younger members as they stay at home during the quarantine and look for other activities to keep them occupied. At the same time, Franks expects to see older generations, who may have previously preferred travel and in-person events, are now more willing to get out of their comfort zone and embrace virtual meetings/communications during quarantine.

ASAE ForesightWorks Driver of Change: Demographics and Membership • Action Brief: Aging World • Action Brief: Socializing Reshaped

An Opportunity for Data Collection

This is a perfect time to start some new ways of data collection optimization. Nadine Goldberg, Executive Director of the American Neurological Association (ANA), predicts increased opportunities for data collection. ANA will be doing this during their virtual annual meeting specifically during registration, evaluation, and CME collection period, which will provide ANA with a unique opportunity to gather metrics about member and non-member habits, interests, and behaviors.

ASAE ForesightWorks Driver of Change: Data and Technology • Action Brief: Nichification: Big Data Segmentation • Action Brief: Fast Data

Connectivity and Career Implications

Staying home to do their part to slow the spread of COVID-19 combined with the willingness to embrace digital platforms has encouraged people to find new ways to connect with others. Gabrielle Copperwheat, Executive Director of the Controlled Release Society (CRS), predicts that there will be richer opportunities for global connectivity and more emphasis on building and nurturing international communities of professionals. However, she also foresees potentially less funding for universities and academia due to the shutting down of non-essential research programs that may impact early-career scientists and students.

ASAE ForesightWorks Driver of Change: Economic Conditions • Action Brief: Global Power Shifts

After weeks of quarantine, we all have had opportunities to consider how the COVID-19 pandemic will impact industries and associations. Giving voice to your staff and board leaders will provide fresh insight to your response plan and the strategic planning decisions you make as a result thereof.

Use the survey to collect and evaluate input from staff or leadership to identify any opportunities or potential pain points that can be acted upon. Groups that have done such a survey are discovering that their assumptions are not always universally embraced, giving new fuel to conversations around how your group can proactively respond or pandemic-proof operations in the future. When implementing corporate foresight and planning, keep in mind there is no universal right answer, and strategic decisions based off of future studies should be tailored to your organization rather than blanket assumptions.

How the Association Membership Experience has Changed

Industry Leaders Share Personal Experiences With Digital Communication During Pandemic

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the way associations are communicating and engaging with their members has shifted. In some areas, association staff are communicating in a more digital format, and in other areas, membership engagement has become more frequent and personal.

Three membership experts at AH gave insight into how their associations have shifted their engagement efforts to better serve their members and keep the lines of communication open. Associations are meant to be a common place for knowledge, thought leadership, and support and that's just what their members are looking to them for, now more than ever.



COVID-19 changed the way we interact with our members by ... employing our core value of flexibility in our member communications. Member needs are changing with the daily updates and are specific to their geography. Being nimble in meeting their needs cross-functionally is key to sustaining a strong member base.

We adjusted to changing member needs by ... allowing extension of the renewal window and accessibility to payment plans to ensure our valued members can maintain their certifications through this uncertain time. We've developed COVID-19 resources to support our members' needs as well.



COVID-19 changed the way we interact with our members by ... communicating support, offering resources, and adapting to their individual needs.

We adjusted to changing member needs by ... reshaping messaging and growing more flexible to strengthen their relationship with the association.

Something we implemented in response to COVID-19 that will continue in the future is ... membership payment plans to assist our members' financial position while providing the support and resources they need.



COVID-19 changed the way we interact with our members by ... adjusting the content in our weekly emails to include content that is relevant to the most important topics going on in the industry and assuring them that we are always there to assist."

We adjusted to changing member needs by ... increasing our educational webinars on a wide variety of timely topics, which in addition to being able to view live, are also housed on JPMA.org.

Something we implemented in response to COVID-19 that will continue in the future is ... ensuring that all baby products are nationally recognized as essential products and supporting the supply chain and retail stakeholders being open.



Crafting Engaging Virtual Events

The Attendee Experience is a Vital Part of Planning Association Events

Events are a cornerstone of association membership. Annual meetings, conventions, expositions, and conferences provide invaluable forums where members network, learn, discover new trends in their industry, and support the association. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues its reach across the world, associations have continued to evolve their strategies around content, distribution, customer service, and — of course — their events. As events go virtual, there are opportunities and challenges facing associations: opportunities to reach a broader audience, decrease event costs, and incorporate new technology into their education programming; challenges of earning attendees' time when competing with work and life demands, differentiating their event from other less-robust online offerings, and maintaining audience engagement throughout the event.

As association meeting and event planners work to deliver leading-edge programming in a virtual environment, the attendee experience is a critical factor that plays into overall perceptions of the event long after it ends. Crafting an engaging event for attendees is a must for associations making the quick pivot to a virtual event and those that have months to plan.

GUIDING ATTENDEE PERCEPTIONS

As meetings go virtual, conveying what attendees can experience and setting the stage for the experience begins with an extensive communications plan. The [American Transplant Congress \(ATC\)](#) had two months to prepare attendees for its virtual event, and incorporated event announcements and branding across a broad range of communications channels to build recognition, set expectations, and generate excitement.

ATC's communication plan included updates to the event website, social media posts, emails, and more.

"There was a highly concentrated effort to make sure everything on the website, social media, and email marketing communication efforts were consistently branded to reinforce the message," said Christina Bertino, ATC marketing manager. "We focused on driving traffic to the website, where visitors would find the most information about the event, so, everything from social media cover photos, social media graphics, the social media page content, all was updated with messaging to drive traffic to the website."

MEETING ATTENDEE EXPECTATIONS

While events this fall have more time to anticipate what their virtual event needs may be, earlier in the year, association meeting and event planners were forced to pivot to virtual events in mere weeks. This short timeframe may cause associations to compromise when it comes to interactivity and features of in-person events that make their events stand out. However, finding ways to incorporate those elements virtually, thus meeting attendees' long-held expectations of the event, can help shape the attendee experience. Maintaining, if not increasing audience engagement is vital for hosting an effective virtual meeting or event, for the shift to the digital realm opens the door for opportunities unbeknownst to live events including audience expansion and scheduling elasticity.

AH client partner, the [Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association \(JPMA\)](#), had just two weeks to transform their in-person event, the Best in Baby Show, into a fully virtual meeting. JPMA had to find a platform that would fit their needs with a quick turnaround, while also providing the same interactive experience attendees expected.

"We needed a platform that could promote the participating show brands and exhibitors to the large audience of retailers, media, and influencers that would have attended the in-person event," Kelly Mariotti, Executive Director of JPMA said.



JPMA also had to pivot when it came to their highly anticipated industry awards program, the Innovation Awards, into a virtual one. They leveraged social media live streaming to engage audiences and build excitement that the awards show typically generates.

“By hosting the Innovation Awards announcement via Facebook Live, we were able to gather an audience at a point in time,” Mariotti said. “Also, points of activity throughout the show helped keep the energy level high.”

EXPERIENCE MATTERS

While communications and branding play a critical role in building anticipation for the event and establishing what attendees can expect from the event, the actual experience shapes attendees’ overall experience and takeaways after the event.

For associations concerned about attendance, free registration — either to select programming or to the entire event — might open the door to attendees who might not otherwise attend either due to cost or travel.

“I attended the ASAE MMCC Virtual Conference mostly out of curiosity, but also because they opened it up as a free opportunity when the conference is usually something you have to pay for,” said Amy Bachhuber, an editorial designer for Association Headquarters. For Bachhuber, attending a

virtual event was great for her because she could do it all in one place: her living room. She selected sessions from the program that interested her, and noted that the format, which included short breaks in between sessions, allowed her to engage more with the program and plan which sessions she wanted to view next.

The most important feature of a virtual event is the technology. The ease of use and ability to navigate the platform quickly plays directly into the user experience and overall satisfaction with the event. Kattie Krewer, a marketing account manager for Association Headquarters, noted that the ability to attend concurrent sessions was a significant factor in her overall enjoyment of the event.

“The platform made it easy to join the event,” said Krewer. “There were concurrent sessions, so it was easy to switch between them, much like switching rooms at an in-person event.” That ease of use, allowing Krewer to exercise her curiosity by moving in and out of sessions, made the event an enjoyable experience from a user perspective.

Association meeting and event planners must find new and innovative ways to craft an experience for attendees that supports the association’s mission, industry, and continued relevance going forward. Leveraging technology, format, and a robust communications plan pre- and post-event all come together to create a positive attendee experience.



How COVID-19 Ups Associations' Communication Strategy

Now is Prime Time to Test Out and Implement New Communication Tactics for Your Association Members and Prospects

Prior to COVID-19, your association communications may have looked different. There may have been a rhythm and dedicated channels used to reach members, prospects, sponsors, and others. However, when COVID-19 struck, associations and members alike experienced a significant shift that affected where and how **membership engagement** was happening with the association. Suddenly, associations were supplying industry news, insight, and guidance to members who were consuming content as fast as it was pushed out. From virtual events to virtual town halls and more robust social media efforts, this shift brought with it a unique opportunity for associations to implement entirely new communications tactics that they may not have previously used.

Now, as communications have stabilized, there's still a great opportunity for association communicators to adjust and align messaging and **current marketing tactics** to work with a society living in what is, at least for now, our new normal.

LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR MEMBERSHIP MARKETING

With an active artist community, Pinterest and Instagram represented a new frontier for the American Needlepoint Guild (ANG). These visually oriented social platforms were perfect for ANG to connect with prospective members, who are interested in and value interesting and beautiful artwork. "Pinterest users search for design inspiration, whether it's interior design or stitching design or more, making it a great place for ANG to share content and build relationships with prospective members," said Christina Bertino, ANG marketing manager at Association Headquarters. "At the same time, Instagram has a much younger demographic but is also a very visual platform with needleart influencers." Case in point: one needlepoint influencer has more than 225,000 followers.

According to Bertino, ANG's membership is skewed toward established needle artists but is seeing a surge of interest in needlepoint in younger demographics.

While plans to expand to Pinterest and Instagram were in the works prior to COVID-19, a slew of new content by ANG members — specifically, mini projects appropriate for stitchers of all levels and launched in response to COVID-19 closures — gave ANG a breadth of content to promote on these social platforms, in addition to member work.

"Content that was developed in response to COVID-19 closures gave us an opportunity to feed these new platforms and have great content to share now and going forward," said Bertino.

SUBTLE MESSAGING TO GENERATE EDUCATION SALES

While ANG smartly leveraged COVID-19 content to build out new communications platforms, other associations are finding ways to market programs with a nod to circumstances surrounding COVID-19 closures and social distancing recommendations.

The Indoor Air Quality Association (IAQA) had plans pre-COVID-19 to launch a new suite of on-demand education offerings. When launch time came, the marketing team saw an opportunity to develop messaging that spoke to the circumstances their target audiences are navigating.

"We understand that people are tired of hearing about COVID; they've moved on in terms of what might grab their attention," said Sarah Black, director of content and creative at AH and consultant on IAQA's marketing. "However, they're still affected by it, so our messaging needed to connect with them and their current situation."

Black and her team drafted messaging that addressed the business owner seeing fewer jobs, highlighting that they

can use the down time as an **education opportunity** to train their staff and increase their skills through IAQA's online education. They also drafted a related set of messaging specifically for technicians, encouraging them to "level-up" during the down time and offering a free class to get started. "We tried to connect with where these audiences might be right now, and it resonated with them," said Black. Messaging was paired with graphics and deployed on social ads.

"You want to be cognizant that COVID-19 is still affecting people when you draft **current marketing messaging**," Black said of how association communicators can connect with their audiences during this time. "In IAQA's case, there was a great opportunity to launch this education product, and the right communication was critical to ensuring it got the attention it deserved."

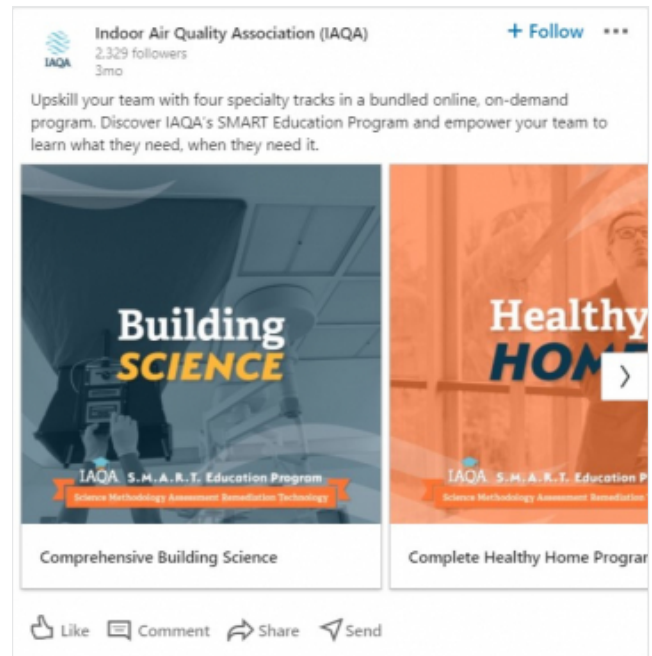
REFINING DATA OPTIMIZATION EFFORTS

While many associations are experimenting with new communications channels and efforts, others see this time as a way to refine their back-end data collection that feeds a more strategic communications plan.

Jon Kinsella, director of digital marketing at AH says that data collection optimization is a great opportunity for associations to understand their members. He recommends that associations develop a member engagement campaign to understand their users and members.

"My recommendation would be to develop a member engagement campaign that asks them to quickly answer three to five questions to allow you to more effectively communicate on a personalized level to your members," Kinsella said. "Not only is that incredible information to have tied to your profiles, but it allows you then to further collect more data and begin to really create those personalized, intimate relationships with your members."

Collecting this data will enhance associations' digital value propositions (the reason why people should join your association) to their members, increase traffic to your website, build social media engagement, and more.



"All these avenues of communication are now the only way to engage your members. So, it's really important that your short- and long-term strategy prioritizes digital over some of the other avenues," Kinsella said.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING

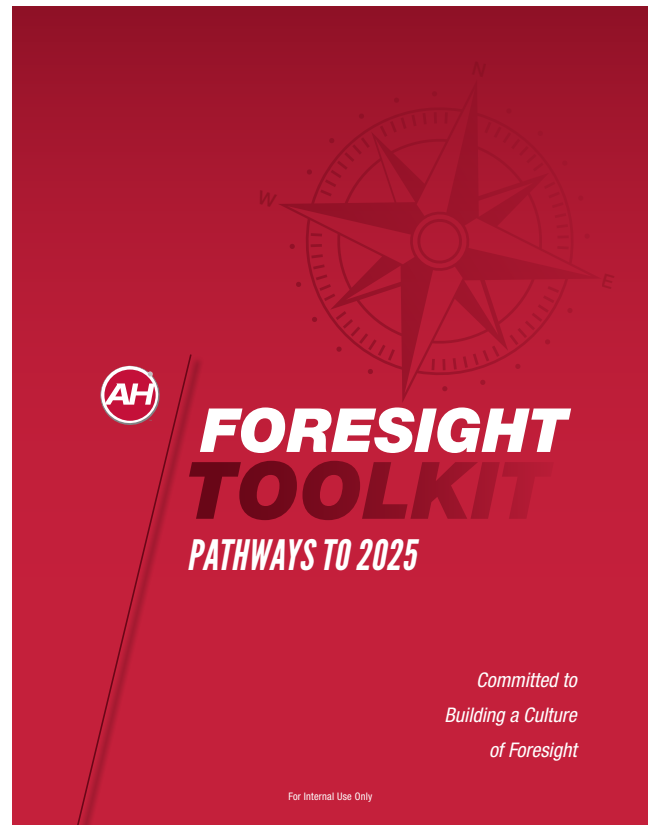
Often considered something reserved for products and services, social media advertising is a highly effective way to communicate with your audience, says Kinsella. A modest investment of just \$500 can super-charge your social content to get it in front of highly relevant viewers — a tactic that associations may find especially important as annual meetings convert to virtual events. “If you have a message you really want to make sure people see, or you have a high-value resource and want to cut through the noise, social advertising can be extremely effective,” says Kinsella.

However, to have social media advertising work well, Kinsella advises that you must have an incentive for people to click on the ad. “The caveat is that you need to attach that advertising campaign to a valuable piece of content,” Kinsella said. That exchange showcases your organization’s value and may be the impetus of what you hope will be the road to membership.

Social media advertising might not be for every association and certainly isn’t for every situation but association communicators may find it to be a useful tool worth deploying as we navigate COVID-19. “It creates a vital opportunity to be in the front and center of your members providing value in a critical time in the world,” said Kinsella.

LOOK AHEAD WITH FORESIGHTWORKS

Download a snapshot of AH’s Foresight Toolkit Snapshot, based on [ASAE ForesightWorks](#), for help navigating your association through a post-COVID world.



Association Education Opportunities: How the COVID-19 Pandemic has Impacted Learning

Members are Looking to Associations for Professional Development Opportunities

Along with the COVID-19 pandemic comes shifts in priorities for some association members. Now, more than ever, members are looking to associations for education. This can come in the form of webinars, podcasts, recorded sessions, certificate programs, and more. Associations at AH are taking advantage of some of the “down time” people are experiencing by packaging their education in different ways to adjust to the way members want to consume it.



An interesting trend we've seen in professional education is ... potential members seeking opportunities to upskill or take a leap into something completely new, like someone changing careers to pursue a career the organizing and productivity profession.

We created a new opportunity using existing educational content by ... developing a free toolkit of relevant classes to offer to members as they incorporate new virtual offerings into their business model. We want to continue to support and engage members while they learn to pivot and adjust to the changing economy.



An interesting trend we've seen in professional education is ... increasing the amount and type of online education, as well as relying more heavily on social media to keep folks connected.

Our association has embraced and/or adapted to this trend by ... more than doubling the volume of our online educational programs. Prior to COVID, we released a monthly podcast episode and targeted monthly bite-size learnings. Since April, we've released three additional podcast special episodes, five bite-size learnings, and kicked off a webinar program.

COVID-19 caused us to reevaluate our educational offerings by ... increasing production and figuring out how to leverage the existing staff and resources to increase the volume of the offerings without increasing the cost to the members.



Our association has embraced and/or adapted to this trend by ... utilizing virtual networking and industry connections to unite our members in this tumultuous time. We have put on a handful of education groups and membership "Happy Hour" networking calls to unite our members across the globe while our in-person international events are on hold.

We created a new opportunity using existing educational content by ... forming 101 Learning Paths using archived micro-learnings, webinars, and live-recorded sessions available on our Resource Library. The inability to hold in-person seminars has allowed us to remind our members of the valuable and relevant recorded material we already have available.

COVID-19 caused us to re-evaluate our educational offerings by ... offering CLE and CE credits to our members online via our webinars and eLearning courses, something we previously only offered in-person. This is very valuable, especially now, for some of our members!



An interesting trend we've seen in professional education is ... an increase in the desire to provide educational content from JPMA associate members and industry partners, which, in many cases, we have been able to host and promote on their behalf, to the benefit of our regular members.

Our association has embraced and/or adapted to this trend by ... evaluating the platforms and content offerings that are most attractive to, and work the best for, our members and promoting all these opportunities in various ways.

We created a new opportunity using existing educational content by ... creating an education logo, updating our webinar resource library and adding a standing section on new and "In Case You Missed It" (ICYMI) educational offerings in our weekly newsletters.



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