

Benefits of an Association Management Company

The phenomenal growth of trade associations, professional societies and other non-profit organizations has dramatically increased the need for effective, professional management.

The traditional answers - a major investment in full-time staff and office facilities or operating with volunteers who often lack time, experience and expertise in key areas can result in high overhead and headaches because long-term goals frequently get lost in day-to-day details.

The concept of association management has existed for more than 100 years and presents an alternative solution to this situation. Today's associations and societies are continuing to appreciate and embrace the many advantages of an association management company.

Centers for Professionalism and Service

An association management company is a firm of skilled professionals whose goal is to provide management expertise along with specialized administrative services to associations, societies and other non-profits in an efficient, cost-effective manner.

Be they large or small, trade associations or professional societies, all volunteer organizations continually need to evaluate their goals and objectives, and then select the management framework that is right for them. Simply put, employing a full-time staff along with the necessary expenses of maintaining an office is neither cost nor time-efficient for most associations.

Shared Resources Provide Value and Expertise

Based on the concept of shared resources, an AMC provides organizations with the expertise that they need, when they need it, utilizing a consistent team of professionals. In addition, specialists are assigned on an as-needed basis to designated projects.

Participating organizations are able to enjoy the best of both worlds: the professional expertise of top specialists for all of their programs and projects with significantly reduced expenditures. Association management companies also shield organizations from the increasingly complex liabilities of directly employing personnel.

Resources You Need When You Need Them

Association management companies provide a centralized office that serves as a headquarters. The overhead costs for this office are shared by many associations, organizations, and professional societies. In this way, an AMC's clients enjoy an increase in resources and also benefit from the latest in advanced technologies and professional equipment without a major capital investment which results in a cost - benefit situation.

Since AMC's staff professionals are often assigned on an as-needed basis, client service is customized to meet specific tasks. These individuals have expertise in specific areas of association management. They know what will work and how to make things happen with a minimum of effort. This in turn allows flexibility to meet the challenges of changing policies, programs, and leadership.

Clients Maintain a Separate and Distinct Identity

Owners and/or clients will find little evidence that their association is part of an AMC. Incoming telephone calls are personally answered during business hours. Each client association has its own listing in phone books, association directories, etc. and has separate bank accounts, investment accounts, membership databases, vendor contracts (such as hotel and printing), educational programs, and promotional campaigns. An executive director often works together with a team who is dedicated to serving each client's needs, carrying their business cards and considering themselves their staff.

Access to Professionals in Key Program Areas

The skills required to successfully run an association today run the gamut from A to Z. Budgeting, financial administration, contract negotiations, meeting planning, copy writing, editing, strategic planning, educational development, marketing, fund-raising, public relations, chapter operations, inventory management, government relations, certification administration, surveys and evaluations, database management, and information systems management are just the beginning. Instead of expecting a few people to "do it all", client organizations gain access to employees who specialize in these areas as needed and also gain the benefit of thorough attention and devoted service to each task. As a result, members perceive their organization as top-notch in every possible area.

Share in the Leading-Edge Technology Used by a Management Company

Association management companies must offer advanced technology to clients in order to remain competitive. Information systems offer tremendous capability and flexibility and serve as a key tool in managing every aspect of an organization including strategic planning, budgeting, financial management, conferences and meetings registration, database maintenance, desktop publishing and general administration. Few associations are able to afford the sophisticated level of technology available at an AMC.

Share the Cost of an Infra-Structure - Pay Only for the Overhead Used

The costs to maintain an office can be overwhelming, especially for small to mid-size organizations. Rent, utilities, technology, and maintenance are just a few of the overhead costs that are shared with all of the other organizations within a management company. Overhead expenses are pro-rated for each association. In addition, access to large and small meeting rooms are available as needed for board and committee meetings. These consolidated meeting locations afford visiting members instant access to account staff, membership files, and other intangible benefits available at an offsite location.

Avoid Dealing with Time and Energy Consuming Personnel Issues

Association boards are best utilized when they are making strategic management and policy decisions related to their field and scope of practice. The issues of employment compensation, benefits, withholding taxes, continuing education, hiring, and firing drain valuable time and energy from the board. Association management companies are the employers of your staff. While each association has input into performance evaluations, they are released from the need to spend time on the day-to-day issues of human resources.

Expand or Contract Staff as Needed with Ease

As a program's size or scope increases, new staff can be added to an account team to provide the additional services, many times without having to spend extra time and energy to hire additional qualified personnel. Similarly when programs are cut, there may be no need to lay off employees, as these individuals can be seamlessly transferred to another association within the management company.

Minimize Phone Transfers, Voice Mail, and Busy Signals with a Fully Staffed Member Services Group

A common complaint from members of organizations with limited staff is the slow response rate to requests and phone calls. With AMCs, member calls are typically answered by a member services representative or a central receptionist rather than an answering machine. These representatives are trained to answer questions specific to each organization. With just one phone call, members can renew their membership, register for a conference or change their mailing address; prospective members and others can find out what an organization is all about. In short, every detail and nuance of the member services function is designed to produce a positive and productive experience for all who contact the organization.

Share Experiences with Other Associations Managed by the Same Firm: Avoid Their Mistakes and Seize Their Opportunities

The collective knowledge of seasoned executives is invaluable as account staffs share their learning experiences with one another. If an organization is contemplating a new project such as adding a password access area to their website or searching for a key consultant to conduct a benchmarking study, chances are that someone else has already implemented a similar program. Clients can benefit from the lessons learned from other association's experiences and can familiarize themselves with pros, cons, cost implications, and potentially unforeseen issues by utilizing that shared knowledge.

Share in Overall Buying Power

A key benefit of association management companies is increased buying power. Combining the printing jobs, mailing pieces, hotel reservations, etc. of multiple clients, year after year, results in a stronger negotiating position - giving instant access to better hotel contracts, printing quotes, mailing services, and more.

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<http://www.associationmanagement-company.com/benefits-of-amc.html>*