

## **AMC 101:**

### **What is an AMC? Why is an AMC the best option for your association?**

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There are basically three ways to “staff” an association. The first is through volunteers who are unpaid. They complete association work as their schedules permit, which means the association advances at the same rate. While they are very much appreciated for their insight and dedication, volunteers often do not have the training or background needed for the tasks required by an association.

The second method of staffing an association is through a permanently hired, and paid staff. Their talents and experience may not necessarily apply to association management activities.

The third and often ideal way to staff an association is by hiring an Association Management Company (AMC). These professionals are hired for their skill sets, and experience and are compensated based on their performance. These professionals are driven to excel in their respective fields. They also understand the consequences of poor performance.

#### **Volunteers, Hired Staff or Professionals...the choice is obvious.**

Association management companies have been in existence for over a century, with the first one having been founded in 1890. They partner with organizations of any size, but most typically with not-for-profit associations or foundations. Today there are several hundred AMCs serving thousands of associations.

AMCs most commonly serve as headquarters and staff for these organizations, but many forward-thinking associations are also turning to AMCs for help with specific need areas such as meeting planning, lobbying, marketing and product development. With an AMC at work for them, an association client can expect – and demand, quality, experience, dedication, and teamwork.

Association management companies are for-profit businesses owned and operated by experienced association executives. Those executives realize that the quality of the service

they provide to an association means the difference between success and failure. Those hallmarks of quality include responsiveness, accuracy, communication, dependability, and eventually program success. Survey results prove that the employees who work for an AMC have more experience than hired association staff people. Association management experience means AMC professionals know how to work with volunteers and contribute the most to their not-for-profit client associations. Their success depends on it!

Unlike the hired staff, which may follow a routine in a mechanical, unimaginative way, AMC professionals are always looking for ways to improve the associations for whom they work. A dedicated AMC professional never loses sight of the fact that the association is the client and that he or she exists to serve. They will also offer ideas and suggestions for how to make the association more successful. When you engage the services of an AMC, you are hiring a team. Each team member has his or her own specialty, which could be strategic planning, financial or executive management, membership, educational or professional development, communication services or meeting and event planning. Because AMCs work for more than one association, they are in a position to offer more talent than the association could afford on its own. They also have experience in other industries, the best of which can be applied to your association.

### **Economics of Engaging an AMC**

Just as hiring an advertising agency or law firm where the client pays for certain skill sets that will contribute to its success, an AMC offers its special services to associations. Associations are the clients, and they pay a fee to the AMC for the specific skills they need and amount of work required.

The principals of the AMC are accountable for delivering value to the association. They are often reviewed against mutually agreed objectives on an annual basis. The principals of the AMC deal with all the staff and administrative "overhead" issues including office space and equipment, human resource issues, and the technology tools required to serve their clients. Being served by an AMC enables the association leadership to focus totally on leading the association and the membership.

AMCs remain the most effective solution to the association management challenge. More associations are discovering that the advantages an association management company provides can help you obtain your mission.