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AMC Institute Makes the Case for AMC Value in an Economic Downturn

AMC Connection, March 2009

In difficult economic times, members of not-for-profits often turn to their organizations for increased support and guidance. At the same time, the staff and board of directors may feel pressed for solutions to stay on course and on budget. AMC Institute, the independent international trade association that represents the association management industry, recently devoted an issue of its *Managing Not-for-Profits* series to providing guidelines for board members and not-for-profit executives to effectively manage the economic downturn and maximize opportunities for their organization, offering best practice scenarios drawn from AMC-managed not-for-profits.

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Based on years of experience managing not-for-profits and associations, AMC Institute offers the following recommendations during difficult times:

Maintain a Strategic Focus. Running a trade association or professional society is often similar to running a for-profit business. The same questions need to be asked: How can the organization grow? Where will we find new “customers”? What positioning do we want for our organization with our target audiences?

Especially in a tightening economy, it is critical for organizations to take a step back and see the big picture. While it is all too easy to get caught up in day-to-day problems and challenges, maintaining a strategic focus will keep your organization on course for success. High on the list of benefits of partnering with an AMC is the value of an objective, third-party evaluation and the strategic specialization an AMC brings.

Assess Staffing Needs. Surviving the economic downturn doesn’t have to mean scaling back on programs and new member initiatives. Take a strategic approach: evaluate performance versus demand, maintenance versus productivity, and shape your business model in accordance.

Staffing is a good place to start. Assess whether you need full-time staff, 12 months of the year, and look for over-specialization of job duties that may be leading to decreased efficiency. To capitalize on time and energy, AMCs provide not-for-profit organizations and associations with the expertise they need, when they need it, by customizing management services.

Enhance Your Buying Power. In a down economy, you’re likely to hear heightened talk of the “value of money”. It’s not just about how much you have in the bank, but about buying power, as measured by the quantity and quality of products and services your organization can buy.

Stretching a dollar will get you so far, and of course it’s important to identify and work to remove any gratuitous expenses. But in true association fashion, joining together with other organizations that have similar purchasing needs can effectively minimize costs and “up” the value of your money. Associations and not-for-profits managed by AMCs are able to leverage extensive buying power when it comes to meeting planning, marketing and communications, creative services and tech support, among others.

Reduce Overhead Costs. Facility bills. Rent or lease payments. Public utilities fees like telephone service and Internet connectivity. Equipment maintenance. Copier and printer costs. Technology expenses. And the list goes on.

Overhead costs can put a small association or not-for-profit under in this economy. To stay afloat, it’s critical to develop a strategy for effective management of overhead costs. Where possible, ensure that day-to-day expenses are part of a larger investment in organizational growth.

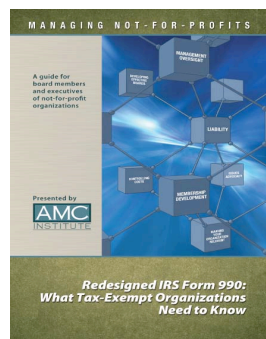
Operating within a framework of shared resources, Association Management Companies provide cost-effective solutions to staffing, equipment, facilities, and

The AMC Institute

AMC Institute is the trade association for the Association Management Company industry. ASAE & The Center and AMC Institute collaborate on multiple projects, including the AMC pre-conference program at ASAE & The Center’s Annual Meeting. We encourage every AMC to hold membership and participate in AMC Institute and ASAE & The Center.

AMC Institute’s *Managing Not-for-Profits* series provides information and guidance to leaders of not-for-profit organizations. The series addresses timely topics from board development and meetings trends, to liability concerns and financial management controls, helping keep association leaders in the know and ahead of the curve. The premier issue of *Managing Not-for-Profits*, entitled “Redesigned IRS Form 990: What Tax-Exempt Organizations Need to Know,” was published in August 2008.

The second issue, “What to Consider When Partnering with an AMC,” offered insight into the unique value proposition of the AMC model — from experienced staff and



budget considerations. Overhead costs for professional services are shared across each AMC's clients, increasing association resources and capabilities, and strengthening each organization's return on investment.

A PDF of issue 3 of the *Managing Not-for-Profits* series is available for download [here](#).

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proven practices to shared resources. To access the entire Managing Not-for-Profits series, or to suggest a future topic, e-mail info@AMCInstitute.org.

With your help and support, AMC Institute will continue to be the leading voice representing the Association Management Company industry, offering vast resources for volunteer leaders and not-for-profit executives.



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