



Identify the Need

By Dan Whitezell

When asked to write this column and direct it primarily to Business Partners, finding an appropriate starting point required some thought. We have all been “members” of many things in our lives and careers, some by choice and others by happenstance. The level of involvement probably varied greatly due to interest in the group or organization, and what you were able to take away from it in personal satisfaction or perhaps even personal gain. Clichés like “you only get out what you put in” come to mind, but let’s face it, they do get a bit stale and no one really likes to be reminded. However, an organization is the sum total of its members, and it takes them all to make it work.

BECOMING VISIBLE AND INCLUDED

Looking back to the early 1980’s, a first experience with APPA consisted of paying a membership fee, signing up for a booth, and showing up at a conference. I stood around like it was a trade show and got almost nothing out of it. The company was not fully committed to the higher-ed market, and I was not at the right level to impact the thinking up in the carpet corridor (a rather short-lived experience, where I could refer back to that old cliché.)

Fast forward to the mid-nineties, and now finding myself at a somewhat different level, it was time to make a commitment and really become a member. At first that was simply visibility with a controlled approach to the market, following participation at the chapter, regional, and international levels. Gradually, relationships were developed, recognition improved, and business

objectives started to be achieved. This is not an overnight type of thing and if those objectives are to be achieved, one has to want to be a member of APPA, and be one consistently. You can find the word “inclusion” in the Webster’s definition of member, and that’s something to keep in mind.

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FOR THE ATTENDEES,
EXHIBITORS, AND SPONSORS.

Being a member, being visible, being included, and being involved led to my appointment as an at-large member to the APPA Board of Directors. My term started about a year and a half ago when the economy was not too bad, and it’s coming to a close this summer when, well, you don’t need to hear it from me. Through this change in external influences, APPA has stayed the course, maintained the commitments to its core beliefs and strategies as directed by the institutional officers and representatives on the Board, and continued to deliver top shelf programs

to support its members. Having seen this from the inside, believe me when I say it has been a challenge, and one the dedicated APPA staff and officers have stepped up to meet.

Serving on the Board led to committee appointments for the purpose of attempting to speak for the Business Partners and to look out for their best interests. One of those was the Planning Committee for APPA 2009, the international conference being held in Vancouver, British Columbia July 8-10.

ECONOMIC CLOUDS

Economic conditions may cast a cloud over this event, and that is unfortunate. It is necessary for members, both Institutional and Business Partner, to understand that this type of event takes a great deal of effort to pull off. Monthly conference calls, e-mails, site visits, phone calls, and daily execution of tasks are necessary to confirm the venue details, acquire speaker commitments, plan the program, and make sure all of the amenities are in place for the attendees, exhibitors, and sponsors. And, like it or not, all of these things cost money.

As one who participates in a diverse set of trade shows and conferences annually, it’s no secret that booth costs and sponsorships help to defray costs beyond those directly involved with the exhibit hall. If it were not that way, the registration fees for the attendees would be so high that no one would come. If no one could afford to come there would be no conference, and without the conference and what it offers for education and networking, where might APPA be?

MARKETING, MARKETING, MARKETING

While it is far from my place to presume how anyone should overcome internal budget issues, allow me to use one term that the APPA Board has heard me use repeatedly: marketing. That is a really broad term and means different things to many people, but it has some fundamentals that can be applied. When looking at APPA 2009 in Vancouver and making a choice on whether to attend, exhibit, or sponsor, break it down into a simple features-and-benefits analysis.

If approval is required in that carpet corridor where I had no success almost three decades ago, list out the obvious features of the conference that can be found on APPA's website, and attach a personal, institutional, or business benefit to each feature. It's tough to argue with a good features-and-benefits exercise, and while it's no guarantee, it

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is a valid approach. Try not to "sell" the conference, but rather "market" it. Or perhaps better said, identify the need and then fill it by attending, exhibiting, or sponsoring. Like many of you, this year's budget is under constant scrutiny. But, maintaining a presence with APPA and continuing to take advantage of the opportunities available makes it a line item to be protected.

Those APPA membership opportunities are exceeded only by its commitment to continue to provide them. Those on the Board will tell you that

I don't get all wrapped up in the emotions of the moment, but let's all step up and make membership matter by making APPA 2009 and beyond everything it can and will be. Good times and those not so good. ☺

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