



Recommendations from APPA's 2014 General Membership Survey

By E. Lander Medlin

As APPA revises its strategic plan and prepares for the future, including moving from individual to institutional membership, the organization has spent recent months examining its value proposition and exploring members' challenges. We recently conducted a general membership survey and received a 17 percent response rate (1,660 individual members). As this research shows, current members place high value on APPA's role in training and professional development and offering them practical advice in support of the profession. In fact, they agree that APPA value meets (61%) or exceeds (23%) their expectations.

MEMBER CONCERNS

Members face a wide range of challenges in their *day-to-day work*, most notably dealing with aging infrastructures (89%), shrinking budgets (83%), expanding workload/staffing issues (83%), leveraging and adapting new technologies (72%), needing benchmarks and performance data (66%), and leadership development of staff (71%). The focus groups also revealed significant concern with workforce training and ensuring the workforce is prepared for future technologies.

Not surprisingly, members *expect the future of facilities management* to be most impacted by escalating deferred maintenance/aging buildings and utilities infrastructure (91%), significant budget pressures/reduced funding (86%), efficient and effective space utilization (81%), keeping

up with technology innovations (80%), and sustainability/energy volatility (74%).

The data indicates members rely on APPA for education and training, which is the highest-rated program/service provided (92%). APPA members also value access to a rich network of facilities professionals (86%) afforded by APPA, as well as networking opportunities at

APPA value meets or exceeds member's expectations.

meetings (81%), which speaks to APPA's focus on bringing attention to the professionalism of its audience. In fact, focus group participants mentioned the sharing of best practices, collaboration with others in the field, and meeting other professionals at conferences.

The level of importance members assign to APPA programs/services suggest the organization's continued viability. For example, more than nine in ten members consider APPA's best practices information will be "extremely important/important" to their needs in 2020, followed by performance data/benchmarking/research (86%), with seven in ten members reinforcing the importance of credentialing and certification opportunities for 2020.

Asked what would make the organization *indispensable* to them, members and

focus group participants frequently point to training and networking, as well as a wide range of other benefits including such things as:

- Better training opportunities *close to home*; more involvement at a regional level
- Online training on a variety of topics (e.g., sustainability, technology, etc.)
- Get me thinking beyond what I know *to what is possible*
- Identify and recognize "facilities management excellence" best practices
- Establish a global understanding of the requirements and skills required to be a technician for modern facilities
- Ensure the credentialing process is maintained at a high standard and promoted as a valuable asset for facilities teams
- Making sense of big data
- Mentoring/increased collaboration
- Access to the most pertinent knowledge, and sharing that information/those solutions

Clearly, young professionals seek similar benefits, but cost is an issue, making online training/webinars, social media outreach, and a mentoring program attractive in the near future. Emerging professionals also indicated the need to focus on issues such as their own marketability, advancement opportunities, and career priorities addressed now.

Like professionals in many fields, members say they will prefer to receive more content via e-mail/electronically

in the future (71%) and expect they will access more content on the website (43%). It's more likely preferences for receiving information via alternative media formats will continue to increase over time. APPA's continued exploration of and investment in alternative media formats is warranted.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the research findings and best practices, a few suggestions were offered by Stratton Research to inform APPA's strategic plan and ensure the organization continues to invest in products/services of critical importance to members.


- Prepare future leaders by using the data to chart a path for future growth with specialized emphasis on senior/veteran members *and* preferences of emerging professionals.
- Increase focus on strong educational programming with heavy emphasis on pocketbook issues such as budgeting

and dealing with aging infrastructures, as well as adopting new technologies, an area sure to expand in focus and interest.

- Provide emerging professionals with specialized educational programming that targets technology, career advancement issues, and expands mentoring programs by pairing young professionals with veteran members.
- Plan for evolving communication preferences that focus more on new technologies, social media, and online programming, which will also offer economic benefits for all members.
- Market the credentialing program to communicate the existing offering for younger members who are new to the profession.
- Focus education, books, and sessions on best practices and performance measurement/metrics for success/effective operations across key member interests.

- Update the APPA website to focus on increasing access to research data and standards and codes.

Clearly, the insights and data revealed by members in this research provides valuable information to inform the revision and implementation of APPA's strategic plan and will help APPA ensure priorities are focused on areas of most importance to the membership. Thank you for taking the time to give us your valuable feedback!

During the coming few months, APPA's Board of Directors will be making further additions to and refinements of the strategic plan that utilize this input and feedback from the membership, build on current programming, and target or expand critical growth areas to meet your needs well into the future. 

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