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Managing the Economic Downturn and Maximizing Opportunities AMC Connection, June 2009

By: *Steve Drake*

The President of AMC Institute, Steve Drake, discusses key decisions regarding AMC Institute's direction for the future.

First off, I am privileged to follow John Francis and others who have served as president of the AMC Institute.

As part of "moving up the chairs," I led the 2008-09 AMC Institute Strategic Planning Process which included a survey of members, interviews with key stakeholders, analysis of key data, and review of the changing association and nonprofit management landscape, and facilitated an eight-hour strategic growth workshop in February.

A few interesting statistics stuck out in our survey of members. First, 94 percent of the members said AMC Institute is headed in the right direction. Secondly, 51 percent of member companies have someone serving on an AMC Institute board, committee, or task force. Thirdly, 41 percent of AMC Institute members are accredited, and 74 percent of those not yet accredited say they are moving toward becoming accredited.

Some of the key decisions regarding AMC Institute's direction include:

Who We Are

AMC Institute is a U.S.-centric trade association that welcomes international members.

AMC Institute's Strategic Intent

Expand AMC Institute's emphasis on accreditation to the marketplace. This includes enhancing value to accredited AMCs, and increasing funding for marketing accreditation to the association community (to a level at least equal to dues paid by accredited AMCs).

AMC Institute's Core Purposes

- Enhance the professional service level of all AMC Institute members through education and promotion of best practices, including accreditation.
- Expand business opportunities for AMC Institute members by effectively marketing the value of the AMC model and of accreditation.

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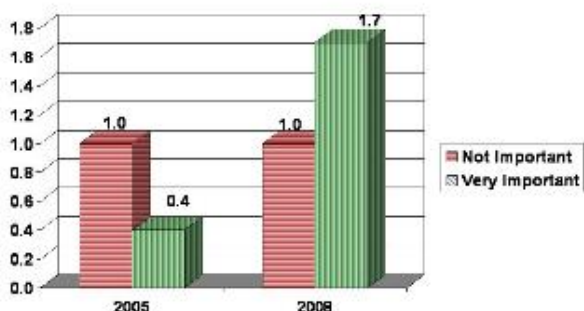
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Here's a summary of what we are anticipating and how the Institute is maximizing opportunities for the industry and the AMC model.

Growing Interest in Accredited AMCs

An analysis of AMC Institute's RFP process during the past three years shows the association community has increasingly placed value on AMCs' accreditation status. Consider the following ratios: In 2005, for every association saying accreditation was *not* important, only 0.4 associations said accreditation was *very* important. But in 2008, for every association saying accreditation was *not* important, an impressive 1.7 associations said accreditation was *very* important.

Growth in Importance of Accreditation
(Based on RFP Analysis)



Our new strategic plan recognizes the growth in importance of accreditation and ASAE & The Center support for a single AMC industry accreditation by aggressively increasing funding to market that accreditation to the association community. And, for those AMCs not yet accredited, AMC Institute offers an accreditation-mentoring program to help them navigate the process.

In addition to expanded marketing, AMC Institute plans to enhance value to accredited AMCs through exclusive educational programming, accredited-member networking, and enhancements to AMC Institute's online RFP process to highlight accredited AMCs.

Outsourcing on the Rise

As associations and nonprofits face tightening budgets, fewer staff, and reduced volunteer time, the efficiencies of using outside professional management resources become more appealing.

The AMC model provides scalability of service—professional expertise, where and when you need it. While many AMCs offer full-service management, we have seen a significant growth in the outsourcing of specific services, from strategic planning and membership development to communications and advocacy. Expect expanded outsourcing opportunities for AMCs in the next six months to a year.

Managing Membership

Economic pressures, changing demographics, advancing technology, and competition from for-profits could cause continued consolidation and shrinking membership among associations. Recruiting and retaining younger members could challenge associations and staff. A growing number of organizations (for profit and not-for-profit) are using content marketing to become a knowledge resource for the profession or industry. This strategy challenges the assumptions that we can restrict information to only members. We'll need to guide ourselves and the associations we manage through this paradigm shift.

Explosion in Social Media Tools

Watching the recent ASAE & The Center list serve debate on the value of Twitter reminds me of the 1990s when many associations debated whether to offer e-mail communications and Web sites. I attended the ASAE & The Center Great Ideas Conference in February, while one member of my staff

attended the ASAE & The Center Technology Conference in January. Both of us brought home with us a renewed recognition that associations need to quickly adopt the emerging social media tools (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.) or watch as others in their industry or profession pass them by for other sources. I applaud ASAE & The Center for taking the lead to get association executives up to speed and urge you to take advantage of their offerings.

According to a new AMC Institute survey, three of five associations currently use social media tools to help drive membership development and meeting attendance. With 77 percent of associations on it, Facebook is the preferred Web 2.0 platforms. And, 71 percent reported they actively use LinkedIn.

Nearly 90 percent of respondents cited member networking as the greatest benefit of social media with more than half reporting use of social media for membership development. And 75 percent of associations linked their social media activity to efforts to drive meeting attendance and promote member activities.

Profit by Association

AMC Institute is focused on building the positive image of the AMC model and improving best practices, complementing the similar work of ASAE & The Center within the association profession. With 150 AMC members, we see increased member engagement and plans to grow to 175 association management member companies by 2012.

The Institute will tailor its educational programs to increasingly meet the needs of accredited and more experienced members, as well as the needs of new, evolving firms.


To help keep its members on top of the trends, AMC Institute has committed to regular environmental scans. Looking beyond the current downturn, AMC Institute will help AMCs continue to plan for their future and that of their member clients, surveying members to see if and how their needs have changed, and identifying new opportunities moving forward.

To learn more about AMC Institute membership and the benefits of Accreditation, go to www.AMCInstitute.org.

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