

{ Executive *Memo*

› Excellence by Association

› FALL 2008

**Social Networking for
Businesses and Associations**

What if you could...

Living in a Hyperconnected Society



VOL. 2, ISSUE 4

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**What if you could. . .
Make more money, finally get organized
and have the time to plan strategically?**



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Living in a Hyperconnected Society

The Mission:

CSAE brings together association leaders to foster professional and personal excellence through unique learning opportunities that inspire members to achieve more and guide associations into the future.

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2170 S. Parker Rd., Suite 120
Denver, CO 80231
303.368.9090 / fax 303.368.4222
www.csaenet.org

CSAE Staff:
Joan Tezak, CAE, CMP
Executive Director
joant@csaenet.org

Jeffery W. Arnold, MAM
CSAE President
Association Services Management Co.
jeff@assn-services.com

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Publisher: Veronika Clark
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Advertising Space Sales:
The Publishing Group
303.753.6334 / fax 303.756.8841
soni@pubgroup-intl.com

Editorial Committee:
Brian Stockman
American Society of Farm Managers
& Rural Appraisers
bstockman@asfmra.org
303.692.1211

Judy Blaskowski
BusinessTruths
judy@businesstruths.com
719.260.7170

Leslie Shivers
American Council of Engineering
Companies of Colorado
leslie@acec-co-org
303.832.2200

Marilee Yorchak, CAE
Business Marketing Association -
Colorado
303.607.9957
Marilee@bmacolorado.org

Cathy Rosset
Rocky Mountain Insurance Information
Association
cathy@rmiia.org
303.790.0216

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Jeffrey W. Arnold, MAM
 President, CSAE
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 jeff@assn-services.com

The CSAE board of directors held a planning retreat to set the strategic direction of the association. Prior to this year's retreat, our most recent major strategic planning work focused on creating brand awareness and realigning the volunteer structure to better support the implementation of our strategic vision.

This year, we looked less at creating all new objectives, but on executing on the planning work we've already done, as well as looking closely at our core business model, narrowing our focus to those things we do really well, and putting our time and effort into quality, rather than quantity of programs and services.

From the President

The planning retreat produced five major strategic objectives, which are listed below in order of importance:

- Strengthen CSAE's financial Position.
- Increase professional membership.
- Redesign CSAE's educational programming.
- Expand and strengthen CSAE networking opportunities.
- Maximize the use of technology.

In order to meet objective #1, we have begun to implement a new structure for our educational programs, which will not only enhance quality, but also ensure that all programs achieve financial breakeven performance or better. We're re-evaluating and re-instituting financial guidelines and developing a 3-year financial plan, as well.

With regard to objective #2, it is my firm belief that by focusing on providing value to the association executive first, participation in other areas will follow. If association executives find value in attending CSAE events, they will encourage their staff to attend. If the executives and staff are there, the associate members will follow.

To meet objective #3, our focus will be on slightly fewer but more in-depth and higher quality programs that ensure attendees walk away with ideas they can put into practice to improve their personal and organizational effectiveness. We've found that the primary factor driving attendance is the program content, not location, not time of day, not month.

The idea behind our networking objective (#4) is to provide enhanced avenues for association executives to gain access to peer-to-peer networking. I've personally found some of the greatest value through CSAE from "roundtable" discussions with fellow executives. Getting perspective from peers can be invaluable, and this objective is all about how to better formalize opportunities for sharing ideas.

The final objective – expanding the use of technology – is interwoven with the others. Our hope here is not only for staff to become more efficient and productive through better technological resources, which will help meet our financial objectives, but also for CSAE to offer more networking and educational opportunities via the internet and other existing and emerging technologies. An alternative viewpoint might be, rather than being an objective in itself, technology helps drive our other strategic objectives.

Your board has set an ambitious course for 2008-09, but I firmly believe it is an achievable one. I look forward to seeing how the plan unfolds and hope you will join us in making the vision a reality.

Social Networking for Businesses and Associations



What is Social Networking?

In both professional and personal life, human beings naturally form groups based on affinities and expertise. We gravitate to others with whom we share interests. Most of us belong to real world networks that formed naturally. Not surprisingly, these networks rapidly migrated to the online world.

Online social networking has been around in various forms for nearly a decade, and has begun to achieve wide notice in the past few years. Online social networks take many forms, and are created for many reasons. Despite their differences, online social networks do, however, commonly exhibit a number of the following concepts.

Profiles – Each member in a network has an online profile that serves as the individual’s identity in the network. In the professional context, profiles often contain information regarding the individual’s experience, education, interests, and affiliations as well as information about the individual’s skills and resources.

Connections – Online social networks typically enable individuals to make connections with others in the network. In some cases, these connections are implicit, and derived from past actions (such as sending an email

to another member of the network). In other cases, the connections are explicit, and are set up and created by the members themselves.

Deceptively simple, online social networks contain great power. They change the online space from one of static web pages and stale marketing messages to a live, vibrant network of connected individuals who share their abilities, expertise and interests.

Why should our association care about Social Networking?

Customers have lost trust in traditional sales, marketing, and customer service. This goes for the membership associations as well. People still want to buy from or associate with people they know, like and trust. The connections social networks enable are the glue that put the humanity back into business to solve the trust problem.

In other words, the organizations and associations that will win are the

ones that most easily enable individuals to build relationships and communities with people they trust.

Isn’t “Social Networking” just for high school and college kids?

Don’t be thrown by the word “social.” Although social networks such as MySpace® (known for being an online hangout for the high schoolers) and FaceBook® (which initially targeted the college crowd) have generated much press in the social networking space, other professionally-focused networks are being used in many ways in the business and associations realm. LinkedIn® for instance is dedicated exclusively to business relationships and is a powerful tool for associations.

The initial use of online social networking for businesses and organizations has been primarily along one dimension, recruiting.

That is, a recruiter for an organization navigates a network of known individuals (i.e. current members of the organization) in order to find potential applicants (either contacts of those individuals, or contacts-of-contacts) who have the skills and expertise needed to fill a job opening within the organization. While this application of social networking is beneficial (especially to professional recruiters), there are many other areas where social networking can be used that are more broadly applicable.

The Top 10 Ways Associations Can Use Social Networking

Member Relationship Development

Online social networks allow prospective members to easily facilitate a real, human level connection with individuals within an organization. This enables genuine business relationships to form and puts an authentic human face on the interaction changing how we see the association from a faceless big organization to a group of people who are ready to help.

Member Support (connecting the member with the right resource)

Online networks enable exceptional customer support that goes beyond the basics, allowing members to connect to experts in an organization who have deep knowledge in an area. This also allows the experts to be alerted when a problem that requires their expertise comes up. This can also help create user groups within the community to solve problems.

Members Use the Network to Find an Expert

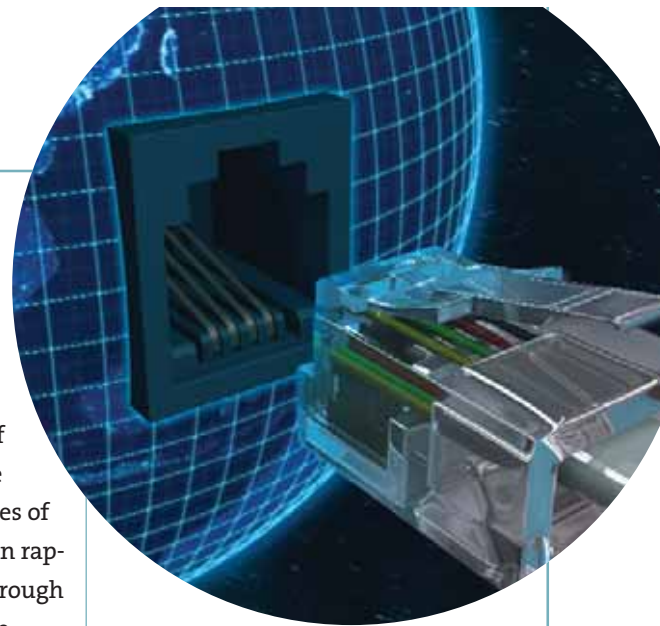
Only a fraction of an organization's "knowledge" exists in databases. Only a small part of the knowledge is in documents and reports. The vast majority of the knowledge exists only in the heads of its members. The profiles of members on a social network can rapidly increase problem solving through quicker connections between the person with the problem and the person who knows how to solve it.

Members Connect to Provide the "Whole Product"

It is rare that a single organization can provide all the pieces needed to meet a customer's entire need. For example, even though a real estate agent aids in the process of buying a home, an entire network of other service providers (including title companies, banks, insurance agents, contractors, and others) are required in order to fully meet the customer's need. By creating a strong network of complementary providers, a single service provider can provide a much greater value proposition to a prospective customer than an individual working without the benefit of the member network.

Supercharge Meeting Facilitation and Preparation

The unfortunate part of meetings and conferences is that it always seems that you don't connect with the people you really want to meet until the



final day of the event, when you meet them randomly in the buffet line. A dedicated online social network created before the event enables attendees to use their time at the event more efficiently, by determining with whom they want to connect before leaving home.

Increasing the Value and Extend the "Shelf Life" of Conferences

Similar to the above point, creating an online social network of event attendees extends the "shelf life" of a conference, enabling the attendees to remain connected and take action on the items discussed at the event. This can evolve a meeting, event, or conference from a "one time" occurrence into the catalyst of a community that more effectively achieves its goals.

Share Knowledge

By connecting an online social network with basic subscription technologies (such as RSS, or "Really Simple Syndication"), an individual can easily "subscribe" to updates from colleagues. This enables a straightforward way to stay abreast of the goings-on in projects of interest, as well as a way to share knowledge within an organization without

People still want to buy from or associate with people they know, like and trust. The connections social networks enable are the glue that put the humanity back into business.

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additional effort. It also addresses the issue of email overload, as knowledge is pulled by those who have a need or interest for updates, rather than the updates being pushed to those who may have only minor interest in an issue.

Differentiate Your Service by Branding Your Association

In a number of associations, the fit between the member and association is the differentiator. If a new member can easily identify his or her areas of commonality with a prospective association, that member can have some assurance that the association will understand the member's point-of-view, and provide the type of service that the member expects and supports.

Prepare for Coming Demographic Changes in Business

Although online social networks are relatively new to business, the MySpace® and FaceBook® generation has grown up with them. For these individuals entering the workforce, online social networking is simply a part of the fabric of business. Accordingly, the associations that have determined how to best integrate social networking into their operations will be the ones that are most successful.

Building Relationships Using Web 2.0 Technologies

Beyond Social Networking, associations can build the relationships with their members and prospective members by familiarizing themselves and



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By creating a strong network of complementary providers, a single service provider can provide a much greater value proposition to a prospective customer than an individual working without the benefit of the member network.

using other Web 2.0 technologies. No, Web 2.0 is not a technical upgrade of the web but instead it's a new way to use the technical aspects of the web to build better relationships with members. It includes blogging, podcasts, video, webinars, etc. Rather than using these tools because they are cool new tech gadgets, we're using them to bring a more human element to the web and our association.

The key to success with social networking is to keep the members and their needs forefront in your thoughts as you begin down this road. This is a fantastic opportunity to provide better customer service to more members than ever before and the nice thing about it is that you can do it at a very reasonable investment. Enjoy! ■



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Social Media in Action: One Association's Experience



> BY MARILEE YORCHAK, CAE, BUSINESS MARKETING ASSOCIATION – COLORADO

THANK YOU

Thank you to the following Coaching and Peer Advisory resources who contributed to this issue of Executive Memo.

Dawn Todd,

Momentum Business Coaching

Yolanda Duperret, ActionCoach

Lorri Molinari,

Your Dazzling Life

I knew I just had to get on the bandwagon. With many of our members belonging to various social networks, and the association/industry research showing that is what the young members want – it was something I figured I better do sooner rather than later.

We formed a committee (because that is what all associations do) to look at options and how to set up a social group. We decided to start first with LinkedIn, since it focuses on professional networking with business relationships.

It took us two weeks to research it, set up a group, assign group managers, and feel comfortable using it ourselves as committee members. The next step was to notify the membership. Imagine my surprise when, just two weeks after we set it up (but had not promoted it to ANYONE) that we had over 20 requests to join the group!

Now, three weeks into the project following the email announcement to our members – we have over 20% of our members participating in our LinkedIn group for BMA Colorado.

We did decide, early on, that this LinkedIn group would be open to members only and plan to promote it as a member benefit. It didn't cost us anything in terms of financial resources, only time. I'm convinced it was the right way to go – marching forward into the new world of social media. ■



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Contact Coach Lorri at Lorri@yourdazzlinglife.com
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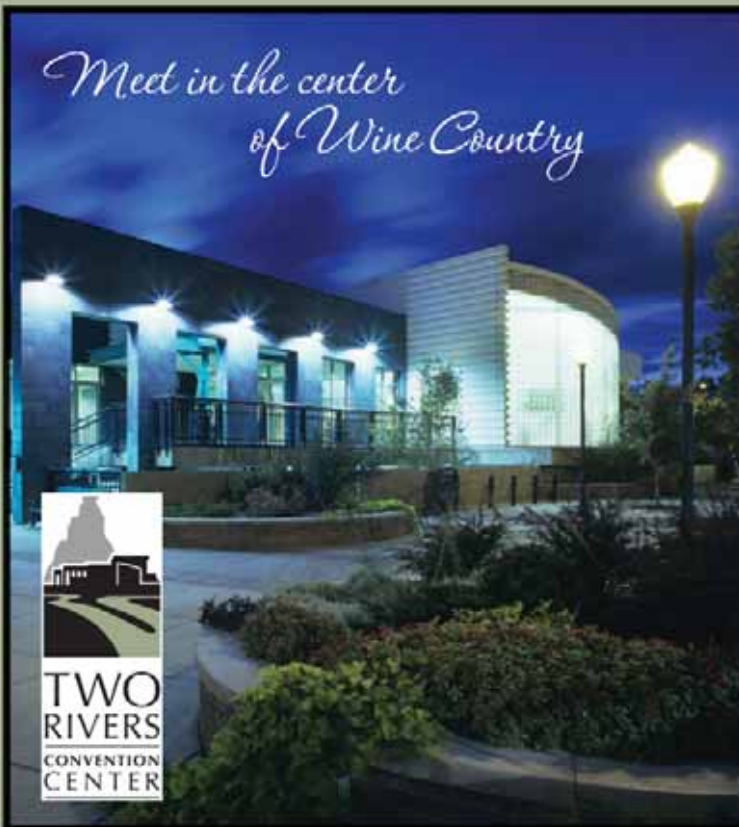
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What if you could...

Make **more money**, finally **get organized** and have the time to **plan strategically?**

Sound impossible?

You could join a peer advisory group – it was both Ben Franklin and Andrew Carnegies' method of choice to guarantee success in business.

What are peer advisory groups?

There are two types of peer groups – one formed of colleagues in the same industry, but who are separated by geography or some other natural barrier that precludes competition. The other type of peer group is formed of business owners in different types of businesses, but who are all at the same stage of development. In any case, it is a group of people who come together for a specific reason (like business development), to collaborate and share knowledge.

“ I had formed most of my ingenious acquaintances into a club for mutual improvement. Our club, the Junto, was found so useful and afforded such satisfaction to the members, that several were desirous of introducing their friends.”

— Ben Franklin

What do you get from it?

Collaborative brainstorming, help with hard decisions, trusted advice, first-hand experience, and a quick sounding board, while the meetings themselves offer a welcome break to focus on critical business issues. A peer advisory group is a group of busi-

ness owners from diverse industries who get together on a monthly basis to solve problems, share best practices and offer each other peer support.

It's the place you go to talk about those tough decisions that need to be made – you can't talk about it with your employees. There's always the fear of starting a rumor, or worse yet, of competitors knowing the ins and outs of your business. Peer groups are the absolutely confidential place to get insight and feedback from others who've been there.

They can also be a complementary addition to executive coaching and in some cases, the organization providing the group also provides coaching.

Peer groups are very popular right now. Ten years ago, very few business owners knew what a peer group was, but today it's fairly common knowledge.

You are the sum total of those that you spend the most time with – even Andrew Carnegie attributed his entire fortune to the power he accumulated through the group of men he surrounded himself with.

Who joins?

Business owners, entrepreneurs, innovative thinkers with businesses in the same stage of development. People who join a peer group are the movers and shakers in their industry – the ones who are constantly pushing the envelope of professional growth – and who are willing to do whatever it takes to reach their goals.

Different groups have a different focus, and becoming a member typically requires meeting some qualifications. Membership qualifications include minimum revenue levels, number of employees, industry exclusivity and most are by invitation only. Cost varies from \$700.00 to \$15,000.00 annually.

It is also vital that every member of the group be in the same decision making capacity in their business, and that all the businesses are in the same stage of development.

It doesn't work to have a solopreneur at the table with the CEO of a high-tech company.



What are the elements that make up a successful peer advisory group?

There are three components of a successful peer advisory group: Collaboration, Confidentiality and Structure.

1. Collaboration

The collaborative process is at the heart of the peer group process. The mix of people and their reason for attending is the most critical piece of a successful group. Interestingly, the very first step in collaboration is not being able to work together.

It's wholeness.

“1+1>2 is the new math of collaboration” —Dawn Todd

The basic requirement to really collaborate, to innovate, to contribute, is a basic sense of wholeness. The equation starts with a whole number.

You have to believe that you have something to offer and that by making your offering you will be more, not less. That your company will gain more from the potential exchange than it might lose. Without this basic sense of wholeness, collaboration is impossible - remember the equation

starts with a whole number, not a fraction. In order to truly work together towards a common goal, each person has to believe that giving ideas and feedback will enhance their business, not weaken it. This basic attitude is a philosophy of life that believes “what goes around comes around” - that givers win. Doing well by doing good is a concept at the heart of collaboration.

*“...(You) can hold a great deal more in an open hand than (you) can in a closed fist”
— Jim Griffin*

Collaborate from your weakness.

Does this sound counterintuitive? Each person has to be confident enough to know that they have a weak spot or vulnerability and be willing to address that gap. This requires a strong sense of self, a deep belief in your company and what you are offering and determination to be the best that you can be.

Collaborate with those outside of your competency.

Collaboration with someone in your core competency will never work, unless you are separated by geography or some other natural barrier that



allows you to maintain your own sense of market share. It's just too difficult to offer your best advice to a competitor, and that is not the focus of a true peer advisory group.

2. Confidentiality.

If I could land on any one element that is the crux of the peer advisory group process, it's confidentiality.

Every member of the group must know beyond a shadow of a doubt

that what is discussed at the table stays there. Without that guarantee, members are not able to freely present challenges or offer feedback. Most peer groups have some kind of a written agreement that clearly spells this out.

3. Structure drives results.

The structure of the group and format of the meetings makes all the difference in whether the process is successful. It's the contract the group agrees to - We've all been to meetings with seemingly no agenda - what a waste of time!

Peer groups typically have the following format: one or two members are chosen as the presenting members of the month. Each one presents their biggest business challenge of the month. The facilitator guides the rest of the group in asking clarifying questions - what is at the bottom of this concern? Then the group offers their opinion and feedback about how they may have handled a similar problem. It's this formalized structure that produces results.

A skilled facilitator makes all the difference in the clarifying process, and helps the presenting members stay on track with what they are presenting. Without a designated facilitator, the group will have a tendency to wander, not stay on task and risk becoming a social event rather than a business strategy session.

How to create your own peer group

So you want to participate in a group, and you want to meet with people you already know - do you want to try to "do it yourself?" It's possible to create a peer advisory group for yourself, if you follow some guidelines:

- Decide that you're committed to creating a group
- Evaluate who you want at the table - only invite those who
 - > are impeccably honest
 - > have high integrity
 - > are givers, not takers
 - > are successful in their field
 - > are willing to make a commitment
 - > have a business in the same stage of development as the rest of the group
- Create category exclusivity
- Designate a facilitator

Good luck in becoming part of the collaboration equation. Remember, 1+1>2! ■

DAWN TODD OF THE MOMENTUM GROUP,
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Although it may seem to be the profession du jour, coaching has become a popular concept and can be an extremely valuable asset to an association. A qualified, capable coach can help you and your employees remain focused, hold you accountable, and assist with working with your board. And if you need assistance with issues such as membership development, association management or finance, a coach may be the answer.

Do You Need a Coach?

These days, at virtually any type of community, association or business event, you will most likely meet at least one person who labels themselves as a “coach.” There are business coaches, life coaches, management coaches, executive coaches...and even phone fitness coaches.

Depending on their education, experience, and expertise, a coach can help you address these and other issues, create plans and assist with problem solving. But as with any significant

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person or entity that becomes involved with your organization, it's important that you do your homework. Taking care to engage the right person will ensure that the coaching experience is a positive one.

How Do You Choose the Right Coach?

To make the most of your association dollars and ensure that you engage the best person for your needs, the following questions should be considered:

What do you expect from a coach?

You first need to have a clear idea of exactly how you expect the person to benefit your organization. Why and how do you envision being helped by a coaching professional? Do you simply want ongoing encouragement and accountability sessions, or are there specific areas in which you need help, focus or direction?

How are your issues defined? If your coach will address problems and issues, then you need to define them and choose your coach accordingly. For example, if maintaining adequate staffing is a problem or your membership has recently fallen off, you need someone with experience and knowledge in those areas. If the organization's cash flow is a problem, you may need someone with a strong finance or accounting background.

What type of coach do you need?

You may not be able to find a coach in your geographical area who specifically targets professional associations. Someone who specializes in working with non-profit or charitable organizations may also be a good match.



BOOK Review

REVIEWED BY MARILEE YORCHAK, CAE,
BUSINESS MARKETING ASSOCIATION, CO

Who will be working with the coach?

Will this person only be working directly with you as the executive officer of the organization, or will they also work with your staff? Will they have interaction with your board? It's important to know this up front, as some coaches may not customarily work with multiple people or wish to have board involvement. Another consideration is that you might feel more comfortable having open, candid (and possibly more productive) conversations with someone who will not be directly involved with board members.

What coaching style do you envision?

Personalities and styles are as varied as coaching types and you need to have someone with whom you can work effectively. Do you envision your coach as a hand-holding person who will guide you gently and offer lots of encouragement? Would someone with a military style be more suitable? Do you want a cheerleader who will simply motivate as you move toward your goals? Or do you want someone with a more solid business background? As with any outside professional, it's important that your coach be a good fit for your association.

What type of venue and frequency would best serve your needs? Do you need someone to meet with you in person or would telephone coaching sessions suffice? Would you be better served by having weekly coaching meetings or would once a month be more compatible with your schedule? If you have large gaps between meetings, you may find yourself reviewing

7 Measures of Success Implementation Guide and Assessment Tool

Published by ASAE & The Center for Association Leadership

As a follow up tool to *7 Measures of Success—What Remarkable Association Do That Others Don't*, ASAE has produced an implementation guide and assessment tool to assess your organization against the seven measures and help guide your ongoing efforts to become remarkable.

I found this guide to be easy to read and motivating. The guide gives an overview of the 7 Measures process, steps to get started, project preparation and design, the assessment tools, and how to interpret the assessment and implementation, along with evaluating results. An extra bonus is a CD that

includes an excel spreadsheet with formulas for inputting the assessment responses, sample cover letters, etc.

Be forewarned though – you must have resources and be committed to using those resources, be they financial, manpower or just your own leadership skill set – to utilize the ideas in this book. It is not something you can do lightly, and you will need a champion on the board and in the executive ranks to make this work. There also needs to be an openness to explore and a willingness to change. Above all, you need TIME to do this process right.

At a cover price of \$49.95 – I think this guidebook is a good investment. ■

the same issues instead of moving forward. Meeting frequency should be structured to provide the greatest benefit from your coaching dollars.

Do they have solid credentials and references? Perhaps most importantly, before you bring an outside coach into your organization, take the time to carefully review their credentials and obtain references from other clients. These days, many people who are retiring, out of work, or wishing to change careers are setting themselves up as “coaches.” However, they may lack qualifications and expertise needed to advise others. Check out candidates with the same degree of caution you would use if hiring a key staff member.

Things to consider:

Confidentiality. The degree to which your coach will be privy to confidential information is subjective and specific to your organization. Take the time to check their references, Better Business Bureau records, and research their name on the Internet. Make it very clear that the association's information must be kept absolutely confidential. If you have a gut feeling that something isn't quite right, then don't bring the person on board.

Exclusivity. Because similar associations sometimes compete for membership, you may want some assurance that yours is the only association in your industry with whom this individual works. In the for-profit

business arena, it's quite common for coaches to have only one client in a certain industry, and the same principles could apply to associations.

Measurable outcomes. Depending on the reason you bring in a coach, you may want assurance of measurable outcomes. This could mean raising your membership numbers by a certain amount over a set period of time. Perhaps you want the association's gross revenue to increase by a certain percentage, or annual expenses to be lowered by a specified amount. This way you can clearly see the results produced by the coaching relationship and whether or not the person is actually benefiting the association.

A qualified, committed coach can be extremely beneficial in helping you solve problems, create plans for the future and stay on track. Look at it as a type of partnership as you are working together toward your goals. Time spent researching to find the right person will help ensure that your coaching experience is positive and productive. ■



JUDY BLASKOWSKI OF BUSINESS TRUTHS® CONSULTING, INC. IS CO-AUTHOR OF THE POPULAR BOOK *THE STEP DYNAMIC: A POWERFUL STRATEGY FOR SUCCESSFULLY GROWING YOUR BUSINESS*. SHE MAY BE REACHED AT WWW.BUSINESS TRUTHS.COM.

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Member SPOTLIGHT

I have had the opportunity to work in association management for nearly 20 years and really do enjoy it. I am the Executive Vice President for the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers, a national professional society based here in Denver.



Brian Stockman
American Society of Farm
Managers & Rural Appraisers

Q & A

Q: What is the function of your business and what do you do?

A: I serve as the chief staff person for a national 2200 member organization. We have a small staff of nine who all have great loyalty. I also serve on the CSAE board of directors.

Q: What is unique about your job?

A: I guess it is working with the diversity of the membership. Members range from one person shops for professional management, consulting or land valuation, to members who work for large lending institutions, management companies, and appraisal firms. Some of our members work for the state or federal government while still others work for real-estate firms. Members are located in almost all 50 states plus Canada and Mexico.

Q: What is the most challenging part of your job and how do you address it?

A: Trying to grow the organization at the rate the industry is growing. Our members for the most part have very successful growing businesses yet our membership numbers have not been reflective of that market growth. We have formed a membership task force made up of individuals who are members and non-members, as well as prospects. We

have some on the task force who are retired and some just out of college. The task force will be recommending to the council and the board some innovative actions that are entirely new for the organization.

Q: What trends are affecting your industry?

A: Technology – The new formats for adult learning including collaborative learning, online education, and the whole social networking issue will be key trends affecting us in the next two years.

Q: What do you like best about your job? Why?

A: The people & The opportunity—I have a supportive staff and a great executive council to work with. They are truly top drawer. ASFMRA has many great opportunities to grow membership and maximize member services.

Q: Why did you join CSAE?

A: High Value –

The networking is awesome. No matter if it is a list serve or a meeting opportunity I always learn something or meet someone whom I can help or who can help me. The reason to join CSAE is the same as it is for ASFMRA members joining ASFMRA. Products and services rank high but the main reason is still the collective wisdom and relationships you benefit from. It is just a 'no brainer'.

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Living in a Hyperconnected Society

In the past 7 days, I have Linked In with 23 people, written on my daughter's Face Book wall, sent 3 Jott messages to myself (my memory isn't as good as it used to be), and read at least 12 Jott messages from our daughter's soccer coach, who uses it constantly to send broadcast messages out to the parents and girls. I set up a new Ning network to check it out and see what that has to offer after reading an article in Fast Company. I have attended 3 different meetings in Second Life with my avatar, where I met two new business contacts on our island, and even "followed" my husband's appointment activities using Twitter.

In that same week, I listened to 3 podcasts on different business topics, took some short video footage of my daughter's winning football toss at field day, using my Flip Video camcorder (where, by the way, she whooped all the boys) and then loaded them onto You Tube so her friends could watch them. I constant-

ly use the Bluetooth connection in my car to talk on my cell phone, and can't live without "Gloria" my GPS (Gloria Petunia Schreck is the name my daughters gave her) to find me the closest Starbucks!

At Synapse 3Di, not only am I one of the founders, but I am the DIGITAL IMMIGRATION OFFICER. My job is to help those of us over the age of 35, immigrate into this foreign land of digital technology. While I have accounts and profiles at all of

these places and I am more connected than a person really has a need for, I do not consider myself a "hyperconnected" individual. I check my email and text messages throughout the day, but check in on most of the other accounts perhaps three or four times a week. But look at those 20-something's in our work environments or

in our homes—they are connected 24/7—at work, home, restaurants, everywhere.

They are hyperconnected!



In a recent study conducted by IDC (International Data Corporation), 2,400 working adults in 17 countries, were polled. The results showed 16% were using 9 or more products/objects/ technogadgets to stay connected and on those gadgets, they were running over 20 applications. That's Hyperconnectivity! Right

behind the Hyperconnected, were those who used 5 or more gadgets and ran at least 10 applications. They are the “increasingly connected.”

What does all this mean? How will this change our world? Well, first it's important to realize that our world is always changing, technology is not going away, and as the American social writer, Eric Hoffer beautifully put it, *“In times of change, learners inherit the Earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists.”* It is time to wake up and smell your old hard drive burning!

Because I am asked to speak on today's technology and how we can

use it to share knowledge, collaborate, and build relationships in a global environment, I often hear from “digital immigrants” (those over the age of 35) that it is all so overwhelming. It can be if you think you must use everything.

Here are four keys to successfully immigrating into this digital landscape:

1. Keep a spirit of adventure

See this as continuing-education and be open and willing to try new technology. See if it fits into your world. Talk to others about how they are using this tool and look for success stories. You can usually find others around you who will complain right

along with you and assure you that there is no need for advancement in technology. Just hand them two sticks and let them build a bonfire alone. Find those who are successfully implementing and using new technology.

2. Find a mentor under the age of 25

If you are like most people, you hang around people your own age, and if you are a digital immigrant, you need to find a digital native to take you by the hand and show you the world through their eyes. Listen to how they talk. Explore how they are connecting to their friends, co-workers and family members. Be open-minded and you will see the future through their lenses.



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3. **Take one application per month and explore**

The best way to get in, for some, is to start at the shallow end and take one

“In times of change, learners inherit the Earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists.”



step at a time. Perhaps this month you set up a Linked In account. Spend about an hour each day (remember, this is your education) contacting old friends and co-workers, recommending some of your business associates or adding information to your profile. Next month try Face Book, Jott, or be really adventurous and attend one of our free learning sessions in Second Life. It's not so scary when you take baby steps.

4. **Explore in groups**

Adventures are always more fun

when done in groups. Get two or three friends or co-workers together and make it a fun learning experience. If you are setting up your avatars to attend events in Second Life, we always recommend coming in with someone else (we have a SL Mentor group, that meets newbies “in-world” to show them around to the educational sites and give tips on using voice communication, chatting with other conference attendees, even how to sit or change your avatars appearance. It's a great adventure when you can fly around, learning and exploring with a personal guide.) Just as people form networking groups to learn about investing and other financial strategies, groups are popping up everywhere for people who are exploring the new digital world.

Two years ago, I sat at a table in Bangalore, India with a training

director from Ireland, two managers from India, and my husband (who is also my business partner) from the U.S. We were getting ready to develop and roll out a program dealing with leading virtual teams, using live learning events, workbooks and lots of webinars and conference calls. Today that same initial meeting can take place in our Synapse 3Di Second Life campus, saving thousands of dollars and many hours of travel, and still get to sit around a table, laughing, talking and building relationships. Programs are now incorporating engaging multimedia tools and virtual team-building events that are actually allowing participants to learn from one another, share successes and receive small group coaching.

“Beep-Beep-Beep” I just got a text message from the client I was meeting at 2:00. She wants to know if we can make it 2:30, since she is running behind. Ahh, I now have time for a cup of coffee! It is a beautifully hyperconnected world! ■

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