

# Captions

The Official Newsletter of the Conference Action Group



CONFERENCE ACTION  
*Shaping Events*



## E-Newsletter – Edition 1: August 2006

---

### INTRODUCTION

Hello and welcome to the first edition of "Captions" the brand new newsletter of the Conference Action Group.

Our aim in this newsletter is to provide topical information to assist anyone involved in the running of events or in the management of an association / society. We will not be bombarding you with a daily, weekly or even monthly newsletter but one which comes out four (4) times per annum with good articles which you look forward (we hope) to reading. If however you do not wish to receive this, we firstly apologise for sending you this copy and ask you to simply email us to "unsubscribe".

So, what can you find in this our first edition. Well, firstly there is an excellent article by Kathleen Clothier discusses the legal issue of whether to "convert or not to convert" relating to the structure of the entity. John Peacock the General Manager of NFP Analysts gives you his first eleven tips to boost your membership base. Amlink Technologies discuss the merits behind central databases and we give you ten questions to ask when choosing your next conference organiser (questions I have never been asked in five years of tendering).

On the home front, Conference Action has just won the award for the 2005 NSW Meetings Manager of the Year (less than 8

employees). The group has also now bedded down the acquisition of the Australian Professional Centre our secretariat service division. Recent investment in technology means we now offer a state of the art database management system, personal phone lines for our clients and member portals for associations. Finally for the third year running our clients averaged a 24% return on their conference income after all expenses – is your event managing that?

I hope you find the newsletter of interest and I would welcome your feedback on anything relating to the content, structure or frequency.

Francis Child  
*Managing Director*  
[francis@conferenceaction.com.au](mailto:francis@conferenceaction.com.au)



***The Conference Action and APC Team:***  
*(From left to right) Maggie Galda, Isabelle Moeller, Francis Child, Moira Brown, Aleks Duric, Louise Pitney, Liz Swaby, Milan Matic, Alyson Arestan, Emma Waygood*

## **INFORMATION**

---

### **10 Questions to ask your PCO when tendering**

1. Of your clients under contract for future events what percentage have worked with your organisation in the last two years?
2. What has been the rate of staff turnover in your organisation in the past two years?
3. What is the average percentage return on total income that you have achieved for your clients in the past 12 months (where appropriate)?
4. Are you happy for us to source and use our own third party suppliers for such things as audio-visual and print services?
5. Do you provide copies of third party supplier invoices to support charges re-billed to our organisation for all supplies?
6. Are you happy to obtain three quotes from suppliers for major expense elements in the budget, including one from a supplier nominated by us?
7. Can you confirm which suppliers (if any) pay commissions to your organisation for services /products? Would you be happy for us to write to your major suppliers to get confirmation of this?
8. What is the legal position regarding any of our funds banked or held by your organisation if your company was to be declared insolvent?
9. Thank you for your list of referees. Would you be comfortable providing us with a referee from any event you have run in the past two years at our selection? If not why not?
10. What is your company policy regarding upgrades, free of charge rooms and promotional gifts from venues?

If you don't understand the relevance of these questions or would like some clarification on why they are important simply call Francis Child and he can assist you on (02) 9437 9333

### **To Convert or not to Convert – that is the Question**

By Kathleen Clothier LLB MBA  
8 April 2006

Many associations incorporated under State based Associations legislation, ask this question from time to time. The matter may arise on their agendas for any of the following reasons:

- They wish to, or currently, carry on their activities across State borders and need to contract on a national and/or international level
- State bodies seek to form a 'federation' style 'Australian industry' body that will operate on a national level
- As an organisation grows, there is a need to change internal and external perceptions from it being a 'community based representative' model to a 'business model'

But the most important question is this: Not what structure should we have but, more fundamentally, what is our strategic direction and is the current legal structure appropriate to meet our future needs?

The legal structure should follow from the 'big picture' decisions not necessarily drive them. However, in saying this some organisations see a legal restructure as the 'tipping point' in driving cultural change. Internally, directors may want staff to develop a more innovative approach to their tasks and to show to funding bodies and sponsors that the organisation is ready and able to accept increased accountability and rigour in its operations. Credibility perceptions are often the least quantifiable of reasons but the most cogent for directors.

Whatever the motivations for change, an association must have the infrastructure to cope with a move up to Corporations Act compliance. The usual change is to convert a company limited by guarantee. State legislation must also permit the conversion, which is the case with NSW and Victorian Associations Acts (but not, interestingly, under Tasmanian legislation). Strong financial and internal reporting systems are crucial as well as the financial capacity to engage a registered company auditor and the services of a skilled company secretary.

Whatever the structure chosen, both incorporated associations and companies face a myriad of legal compliance and risk management issues. Having a structure that works for members, boards and other

key stakeholders should always assist, and not detract, from the proper functioning of the board.

*Kathleen Clothier LLB MBA  
Managing Director, Governance 4 Pty Ltd  
kathleen@governance4.com.au  
0403 77 3262 (m)*

## **22 ways to boost membership (Part 1)**

By John Peacock, General Manager, NFP Analysts Pty Ltd  
24 April 2006

Members are at the core of not-for-profit organisations. They provide financial and human resources to perform the work of the association. A healthy membership leads to a vital organisation, yet even strong groups need to pay close attention to boosting membership numbers.

With a large marketing and promotion budget, associations could accelerate membership growth, but few organisations enjoy the luxury of ample funding. Therefore, we have to 'think smart' to utilise low-cost and highly effective strategies.

### **Recommendation 1: Be relevant**

Relevance is the first way to ensure your not-for-profit will have members. In response to a valid cause, your association needs to craft its vision, mission, goals and specific objectives as the foundation for membership.

### **Recommendation 2: Have the right structure**

With a valid mission and a worthwhile cause, don't hold your organisation back with a restrictive structure. The best NFP organisations don't draw unnecessary geographic boundaries. Federations of similar bodies in different states and territories are usually better off becoming single-entity bodies. Then the real issue of growing an association will not be distracted by parochialism.

### **Recommendation 3: Survey members' needs**

Associations have the natural advantage of boards or committees that comprise members. However, the views of committed members are not necessarily representative. Systematic surveys must be regularly conducted to identify changing trends or simply to reinforce that Board and management are in touch with member sentiment.

### **Recommendation 4: Plan your marketing**

Whether as part of your overall strategic plan or as a stand-alone document, organisations must document their marketing intentions in a PLAN. As with all plans, marketing actions planned must be relevant, affordable, achievable and measurable.

### **Recommendation 5: Provide the right and new member services**

People will want to know "what's in it for me?" when joining or renewing memberships. The answer should

be relevant products and services. By surveying members, NFPs will know what is wanted. A greater challenge is to provide what is needed. Also, new services must be trialed and introduced if successful. Don't rest on past successes or rivals will move in.

### **Recommendation 6: Run seminars, workshops and conferences**

Events and education are among the most common and popular services provided by NFPs. As well as holding relevant and well priced events, consider 35% registration discounts to members and hold members-only events.

### **Recommendation 7: Support Special Interest Groups**

The existence of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) is a common reason people join a not-for-profit. In a world of specialisation, detailed knowledge on fine points is what people seek. Members will be able to gain close identification with a SIG, hence encouraging joining and renewal of the main body.

### **Recommendation 8: Lobby for your cause**

Effective lobbying campaigns for your organisation's cause will attract members. Members and potentials will be impressed that your group is making its voice heard. They will be proud to be part of an active group.

### **Recommendation 9: Appoint membership-responsible volunteers**

If an association has the size to appoint a staff member to the job of membership marketing, this is better than having a specific appointee on the Board of Directors. However, it is good to have a local area volunteer members with membership as a portfolio. Their area knowledge will help identify targets and a good local reputation will aid credibility.

### **Recommendation 10: Set targets**

Targets for membership should be set every year. Targets can be multi-layered, looking at different demographics such as geographic area, gender and age. If your association has broad appeal across Australia, consider targets per federal electorate. Electorates have approximately the same population, so penetration will be easy to benchmark.

### **Recommendation 11: Communicate personally**

The most effective promotion is via personal recommendations and personalised letters. Letters must be followed up with a phone call. Assistance in letter production from the secretariat can make this promotion an easy task for members.

*(Recommendations 12 – 22 will be published in Captions Edition 2, August 2006.)*

*John Peacock is General Manager of NFP Analysts Pty Ltd, which provides information, training & advice to management and boards of not-for-profit organisations. John can be contacted on 02 9413 9999 or [jpeacock@nfp.net.au](mailto:jpeacock@nfp.net.au) The website for NFP Analysts is <<http://www.nfp.net.au>>*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

---

Associations Forum National Conference,  
30 - 31 August 2006, Sydney  
<http://www.associations.net.au/>

INCE 2006 – 14 - 17 November 2006,  
Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia.  
<http://www.nfpn.com.au/cm.esp?id=3001&pageid=1N410BK6H>

## NEWS FROM CONFERENCE ACTION & THE APC

---

### Conferences currently organised by Conference Action

Access more details at  
<http://www.conferenceaction.com.au/>

*Australian Society of Geriatric Medicine 2006 Conference*  
Christchurch, NZ: 4 - 6 SEP 2006

*Recruitment & Consulting Services of Australia 2006 Conference*  
Gold Coast: 6 - 9 SEP 2006

*Australasian Insurance Claims & Fraud Expo*  
Sydney: 7 - 8 SEP 2006

*2006 National Moodle Conference*  
Sydney: 14 - 15 OCT 2006

*Stroke Society of Australasia 2006 ASM*  
Adelaide: 11 - 13 OCT 2006

*Australian & New Zealand Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons Conference 2006*  
Sydney: 19 - 21 OCT 2006

*Australian College for Emergency Medicine 2006 ASM*  
Sydney: 19 - 24 NOV 2006

*Procurement Forum & Contracts on Show 2006*  
Sydney: 22 – 23 NOV 2006

*IEEE International Conference on Advanced Video and Signal Based Surveillance*  
Sydney: 22 – 24 NOV 2006

*Information Online 2007*  
Sydney: 29 JAN - 2 FEB 2007

*National People and Organisational Development Summit*  
Sydney: 6 – 8 FEB 2007

*ASLA - School Libraries*  
Sydney: JUL 2007

### New APC Clients:

The APC is pleased to announce that the following organisations have outsourced/confirmed to outsource their Secretariat to the APC:

- Stroke Society of Australasia (SSA);
- Australian Research Management Society Inc. (ARMS);
- Department of Health and Ageing - Australian and New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry (ANZCTR).

## SPECIAL OFFER

---

### Association Forum Offer:

We are pleased to offer CA and APC clients join Association Forum ([www.associations.net.au](http://www.associations.net.au)) as Small Not-for-Profit Organisations at the **discounted rate of \$220** for the first year of membership incl. GST. Simply contact Isabelle on 02 9431 8600 or email [isabelle@apcaust.com.au](mailto:isabelle@apcaust.com.au) to find out more.

## YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

---

If you have any suggestions on the content of this newsletter, would like to make a contribution or would like find out about advertising opportunities, please contact Isabelle on Tel. 02 9431 8600 or email [isabelle@apcaust.com.au](mailto:isabelle@apcaust.com.au).

## CONTACT DETAILS

---

Conference Action Tel. 02 9437 9333 Fax: 02 9901 4586 Web: <a href="http://www.conferenceaction.com.au">www.conferenceaction.com.au</a> The APC Tel 02 9431 8600 Fax: 02 9431 8677 Web: <a href="http://www.conferenceaction.com.au">www.conferenceaction.com.au</a> Postal address: PO Box 576, Crows Nest NSW 1585
---

Please  subscribe or  unsubscribe me from this newsletter:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_