

Captions

The Official Newsletter of the Conference Action Group



CONFERENCE ACTION
Shaping Events



E-Newsletter – Edition 2: November 2006

INTRODUCTION

Welcome once again, or for the first time to "Captions" the newsletter of the Conference Action Group. Our first letter was warmly received by most respondees so thank you for your feedback which is always welcome. As with any new venture there are sometimes teething problems and I understand a couple of typos on names were not well received!! I apologise for this and understand the frustrations being someone who regularly has a gender-change on the use of "e" instead of "i". We have made every effort to make sure this does not recur but please let us know if there are any amendments which need to be made.

Once again we hope that this issue includes articles which are both interesting and useful for you in your day-to-day operations. John Peacock from Associations Forum completes his 22 tips for growing membership, Aleks Duric gives you some basic principles for your database management, Kathleen Clothier looks at the motives for taking up a Board role and our "10 Tips" looks at areas to control costs on your next event. In addition Associations Forum has made a special offer to readers of Captions to join at a reduced subscription. I would strongly recommend looking at this offer as there is a great deal of good information available from that source.

The Group has just gone through one of the busiest periods I can remember with two new clients joining the APC secretariat and ten major conferences run in the past three months. All very challenging but also extremely successful overall.

Finally we would like to welcome our latest staff member Hanna Ulkuniemi who joins Conference Action as a Project Manager having escaped the cold of Finland!!

Francis Child
Managing Director
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INFORMATION

10 Focus Areas to control Event Costs

- 1) Make sure you have at least two venue quotes so you can leverage the negotiations
- 2) Always check you are comfortable with minimum guarantee number levels in your venue contracts. Negotiate them as low as possible in case of poor turnout.
- 3) Confirm all speaker entitlements in writing and get confirmation in writing from the speaker. The difference in economy and business class airfares can be substantial!!
- 4) Audio-Visual quotes can vary by up to 100% for the same meeting, so make sure you get competitive quotes and that you really need the equipment being advised.
- 5) Keep content changes to a minimum for design. Every time a designer has to make a change to the layout they will charge you.

- 6) Check the weight of all promotional pieces so you don't pay unnecessary mailing costs. You can also get better mailing rates now with bar-coding – check with your mailhouse / post office about this.
- 7) Talk to your exhibition builder to check how long they really need for build and bump out. Often you can save a day's venue hire with careful management.
- 8) Manage your catering numbers carefully as saving of up to 20% of your budgeted costs can often be achieved with correct catering.
- 9) Collect as many registrations of interest for your event before you go to market. These people can be contacted by email saving print and mailing costs
- 10) Check that your conference organisers are quoting like-for-like and not marking up supplier invoices (see 10 questions to ask in last month's newsletter)

For further information on any of these call Francis Child on (02) 9437 9333

22 ways to boost membership (Part 2)

By John Peacock, General Manager, NFP Analysts Pty Ltd

(For recommendations 1 – 11 see Captions Edition 1, August 2006 on our website: http://www.apcaust.com.au/show_page.php?pageId=15)

Recommendation 12: Research the public domain

If your association has a specific membership such as a profession, looking at the Web or the Yellow Pages is an easy way of locating persons who should be but who are not yet members. Once a firm is identified, approaches to senior executives are recommended as they can decide most easily whether to join.

Recommendation 13: Include membership in agendas

Boards and chapter committees should include membership growth as a standard item on the agenda for meetings. This will ensure that the issue is not overlooked and that credit is given to the work of the staff or committee member responsible for membership.

Recommendation 14: Use public relations to build profile

All publications seek content, and stories (unless they are "advertorial") are free. In the vast majority of cases, NFPs have good stories to tell. Stories will be used in the media if the journalists know of these stories. Public relations promote your body to the media: if they don't know you exist, they can't write stories on you.

Recommendation 15: Be cautious with advertising

A cost/benefit analysis of inserting a brochure or placing an advertisement in publications should be undertaken. Paid advertisements will usually not result in new membership to justify the investment.

Recommendation 16: Launch your association or a new project

Launches are hard sell activities, directly asking people to join an association or to support a specific promotion. Planning a launch sets a deadline and is motivating to the staff and volunteers. Publicity is gained by promoting the launch and enthusiasm is generated by attendance.

Recommendation 17: Set a membership 'season'

If your institute, society or association has a set membership period, such as the July to June, consider establishing a pattern of having April and May as the season to seek new members. Volunteers can be motivated to work extra hard for membership if they know it is for a few weeks and there is a common push around the country at the same time for the same goal. Also, "14 months for the price of 12" is a good benefit to push in promotions.

Recommendation 18: Abolish joining fees

If you want as many people as possible to join your group, don't discourage them by charging a "joining fee". Whilst such fees were set to generate extra revenue and to pay for a little more administration in entering a member into a computer, charging joining fees is short sighted. If anything, potential members should be given a discount or trial period to get them hooked, then charge full fees.

Recommendation 19: Promote to likely future members

If membership of your organisation will happen at a stage, such as after a University degree, get to know the relevant undergraduate campuses and lecturers. Offer special discounted rate student membership to get them hooked on membership early.

Recommendation 20: Work with related groups

Similar groups that are not direct competitors may be pleased to have a strategic partnership with your NFP. By cross-selling membership, both organisations may be enhanced.

Recommendation 21: Innovate and be creative

Creative, innovative marketing campaigns yield exciting results. Members should be invited to think laterally with ideas for increasing membership. If a new idea seems useful but is untested, a chapter structure means that an idea can be trialed in an area and, if successful, used across the nation.

Recommendation 22: Ensure Retention

Without maintaining your current membership, the advantage of new members will be lost. Whilst members see that they receive a good service, they will be inclined to continue their membership. Therefore, organisations must maintain a high level of relevant membership service so that they maintain our current base from which to grow.

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 The website for NFP Analysts is <<http://www.nfp.net.au>>

CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS - Trick or Treat?

Kathleen Clothier LLB MBA

Introduction

Directors of companies limited by guarantee face strict hurdles should they wish to take advantage of their position on a board and gain a benefit for themselves or their relatives or friends. However, many well meaning citizens consider that there should be some pay off for expending, often, considerable time and effort on an honorary board especially of a peak or industry body.

Why accept a Board position?

Motives for accepting Board positions are varied and include the altruistic: you may wish to help your community or fellow business persons or professionals, extend networks and increase one's standing in the community, assist with transiting into a new community or occupation. But often, the choice is determined finally, by '*What's in it for me*'.

Why you should **not** take on a Board role?

- ❖ To gain priority or preference on a tender or privileged access to offers that should be passed onto all members;
- ❖ To obtain confidential information and using it to benefit your own business;
- ❖ To be contracted as a consultant or employee through that connection without the organisation first following strict procedures.

Seeking to gain from your position

Should you consider it appropriate to seek a material benefit from your organisation, then the non-interested directors should consider, in your absence, the following:

- *firstly*, does the organisation actually need the service, at all – just because you put an idea forward does not mean the Board should automatically consider or accept it;
- *secondly*, has a transparent tender process been followed and all applicants independently assessed without your input or lobbying either inside or outside the boardroom;

- *thirdly*, if you are considered the best person to undertake the work, have terms and performance measures been negotiated on an arm's length basis and all legal requirements followed; and
- *fourthly*, have performance measures and methods for monitoring been agreed and implemented and will your continuing presence on the Board cause difficulties during the monitoring process? Ultimately, you may need to make a choice – remain on the Board or resign, at least while any contract is in place.

Step back from benefiting yourself

If you are on a Board you should be *behind* all others, not in front, when it comes to taking up opportunities presented to you. This is because of:

- ❖ your position and influence in determining the final outcome;
- ❖ your inside information which could allow you to prepare a superior tender or make a better pitch for a project;
- ❖ in the eyes of a relative or friend who is a tenderer, being seen as able to lobby on their behalf from the 'inside';
- ❖ being able to mitigate loss if the relationship goes sour, for example, because your colleagues on the Board are unprepared to sue you.

The law is very strict when it comes to using your position or inside information to gain an advantage for yourself or cause a detriment to the company. It is a breach of common law, constitutional and statutory obligations, for example, sections 181-183 of the Corporations Act 2001. Indeed, to do so with knowledge that you are in the wrong amounts to a criminal offence.

The way forward

Consider carefully your motives in taking on a Board role. If it is primarily for personal gain, then think again. If you do have a legitimate case in seeking a material personal benefit from the company then make full disclosure to your fellow Board members, and follow carefully all processes prescribed by law, internal policies, the constitution and your own ethical standards before taking up any such benefit.

*Kathleen Clothier LLB MBA
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Basic Customer Database Principles

Aleks Duric AIMM, Project Manager,
Conference Action

This tip sheet deals mainly with customer/client/volunteer databases, used by not-for-profit organizations. Not everything in this tip sheet will be appropriate for your database; field names vary, as does the information you want to track about different people.

Good People and Good Systems = Good Database

A practical, simple, adaptable database comes not from a computer program, but from people who understand the importance of gathering information and of thinking proactively, and who are dedicated to keeping the information up-to-date. The first step in putting together a database is to find out what each staff member wants to be able to do with the database (a phone list of everyone who has called to volunteer for a particular project, a report that identifies people who donated money to your organization in the last quarter, a list of all city and county officials, etc.). Based on how they want to use the database, you will create and add fields to track information about people in your database.

Limit the Number of Databases You Create

The more databases you create, the harder it is to cross-reference information. Under this system, if your board member moves, you have to change his or her information on several separate databases. It's not time or cost effective. You should have only one for tracking people/customers. Your accounting staff may need their own for vendors, bills and payroll; your program manager may need one to track projects and their progress; etc. But anything that relates to your membership, customers, volunteers, donors, etc. should be kept in one, centralized database.

Capture Everyone

The purpose of your database is to GROW. Everyone/anyone who calls, comes to a meeting or event, asks for information, is sent material about your company, etc., should be put on the database, because those people are the best audience to approach about volunteering, donating, attending an event, etc., because they've voiced an interest in your organization already! Develop a system that everyone will use to capture this information, and make sure this information is inputted in a timely manner -- a good rule is that new information is inputted into your database no more than 48 hours after it was received by the organization.

Who's In Charge?

If you have under ten (10) staff people, only one staff person should have the responsibility of inputting, changing or deleting information to the database. This cuts down on duplicate records, information conflicts, etc. If more than one person is inputting information, you need to create a category that will track who inputted what. However, EVERYONE should contribute information for the database; all staff members have a responsibility to provide important names, address changes, etc. for the database.

Universal Access

While one person may be in charge of the database, everyone on staff should have at least limited access to it (looking up phone numbers, generating and printing reports, etc.).

In the next issues of Captions we will explore database fields, sorting information, database security and database backup.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

CEO/ Head of Staff Symposium, 9 - 10
February 2007, Sofitel Gold Coast
www.associations.net.au

AIME 2007, 15th AsiaPacific Incentives and
Meetings Expo, Melbourne Exhibition Centre,
Australia, 13 - 14 February, 2007
www.aime.com.au

NEWS FROM CONFERENCE ACTION & THE APC

Conferences currently organised by Conference Action

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

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

Contracts on Show 2006
Sydney: 22 – 23 NOV 2006

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

Bioenergy 2006

Perth: 5 – 8 DEC 2006

Information Online 2007

Sydney: 29 JAN - 2 FEB 2007

*National People and Organisational
Development Summit 2007*

Sydney: 7 – 8 FEB 2007

*Design and the Handmade: Powerhouse
Museum Conference*

Sydney: 29 MAR – 1 APR 2007

AVETRA 2007 Conference

Melbourne: 11 – 13 APR 2007

International Multi-Sensory Research Forum

Sydney: 4 – 8 JUL 2007

Smart Strokes 2007

Sydney: 2 - 3 AUG 2007

*Recruitment & Consulting Services Australia
Annual Conference*

Location tba: AUG 2007

*Australian School Libraries Association National
Conference*

Adelaide: 3 – 5 OCT 2007

Stroke Society of Australasia 2007 ASM

Perth: 17 – 19 OCT 2007

ANZAOMS Conference 2007

Perth: 24 – 26 OCT 2007

*Australia & New Zealand Spinal Cord Society
2007 Conference*

Sydney: 1 – 3 NOV 2007

PESA – EABS III Conference

Sydney: 7 – 10 SEP 2008

New APC Clients:

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

- AVETRA (Australian Vocational Education Training and Research Association)
- Society for Knowledge Economics Inc.

SPECIAL OFFER

Association Forum Offer:

We are pleased to offer CA and APC clients join Association Forum (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 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.

CONTACT DETAILS

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