

TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

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TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

A New Form Of Networking

Seventy percent of Americans belong to one association. Twenty five percent belong to four or more associations. Our professional existence is held together by the network of people with whom we share common interests, even common goals. As technology gives us new ways to link up, communicate and share ideas, our need to identify with a collective presence reflects our need to become more significant. Today, this need is being fulfilled by privately organized, managed and funded trade associations.

FOR-PROFIT

If there is anything that drives any venture to succeed, the principal motivation is profit - the commercial purpose for which any trade activity exists. Because we still maintain a mindset that associations should not be a money-making venture, it is difficult to imagine a trade association as a for-profit representative body of a particular trade.

However, as the efficiency, agility and productiveness of for-profit trade associations become evident, members become more confident that operating a for-profit trade association is the only way to guarantee that the association will remain productive and beneficial to its members.

OBJECTIVES

Unless your primary reason for creating a trade association is to lobby issues in Washington, your association's principal objective should more or less focus on information sharing.

If you are creating a trade association as a forum for its members to share ideas about their trade, it is essential that you provide your members this vehicle by which they can communicate, maybe even interact.

BEYOND MEMBERSHIP

Since most associations get started with low membership dues, usually in the \$20 to \$30 bracket. Many associations are lucky to break even on membership dues alone. To guarantee its healthy existence, its financial foundations should expand beyond being exclusively dependent on membership dues.

Although most trade associations start off with a newsletter, it is in an ideal position to organize conventions (that provide members a forum to network, meet suppliers, and hear experts) which can be a prime money-maker for the association.