



Sustainability of an association has been at the core of its management strategies. The persisting topic proves, admitting unwillingly, the lack of it or unsuccessful efforts to reach it. Even the best performing associations may still face a plethora of challenges in times of changes, and recognise the need for adaptation.

Associations' New Paths to Sustainability: Not just to Survive, But to Thrive!

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To start with, the internet brings about new ways in which people communicate and exchange information with each other. They have largely morphed into virtual ones, and this has also affected how associations, as a knowledge hub, will continue their work.

Then the pandemic has led to hard decisions for them, too. There have been postponements or cancellations of many public events. In response, many associations began to turn to the internet in search of a solution, holding a webinar or hybrid event instead of an in-person congress, for example.

Then a new challenge appears. Say that all associations in the same industry are shifting their events online; suddenly there are numerous similar virtual events, most of which are free of charge in this transition period. Viewers can now watch it in any place, at any given time of their choice. If the content does not promise uniqueness or the answers they seek, participants can simply jump to other events. This means an association will face higher competition from similar events than ever before in attracting attendance.

To increase financial stability, associations can get creative with their sources of revenue. When pivoting events online, they can explore opportunities that open up non-due revenue streams. As most programmes can be recorded and requested on-demand by the participants, they can be packaged and sold to non-participants. A series of recorded materials can further be organised and integrated into an online course or ebook. With an online course, the content can be combined with the training resources you are already proving, and become a training programme that creates value for both members and the association.

While new sources of revenue are important, attendance at meeting events is also valuable to an association. However, as the risk of being physically present at a meeting increases, the expected return for a participant also rises. It is ever more vital for an organisation to understand what objectives attendees truly intend to accomplish at an event: what do I have that they cannot get anywhere else and therefore, cannot afford to be absent? This can be a rare opportunity to meet a key person relevant in the field or industry, efficient networking activities, or the possibility of getting inspired. This means that programmes need to be planned much more meticulously than before.

Once associations retain the capability of attracting physical attendance, they are more likely to be eligible for sponsorships from a destination. International conferences are significant in destination development, especially when attendees get to know a city in a more in-depth way. Associations harness great opportunities to create chances for a higher degree of involvement and connection with a place. This may lead to a symbiotic relationship with a destination and a resulting win-win situation for everyone.

In trying times, organisations might find themselves struggling with corner-cutting measures. However, in the long run, they might lose the opportunity to transform and grow. It all boils back down to the core value of an association. What is the situation that it is trying to improve? What is the initial mission it set out to accomplish at the very beginning? Let that passion take the lead as associations gain a new foothold in these changing times.



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