The association industry is one of longstanding traditions. Some associations have been around for decades, some even for centuries, and therefore have seen the age of technology become an enabler changing the way associations interact and deal with members. Most have transitioned successfully from paper to paperless and have enhanced their style and means of communication. Slowly over the last few years associations have realized that there are important pipes between the way of communicating with and engaging the young generation. Some associations have deliberately brought younger members into strategic planning and future leader programs have become very popular.

A few years back association leaders started to talk about creating communities and the need to proactively engage the younger generation, whilst industry partners and exhibitors explained that marketing money was shifting to digital, and that more data was needed to justify live event spending.

Online communities sprung up to focus on online membership forms that were emerging pre-pandemic have strengthened and forms that were emerging pre-pandemic have strengthened and have seen the age of technology become an enabler changing the way associations interact and deal with members. Most have transitioned successfully from paper to paperless and have enhanced their style and means of communication. Slowly over the last few years associations have realized that there are important pipes between the way of communicating with and engaging the young generation. Some associations have deliberately brought younger members into strategic planning and future leader programs have become very popular.

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Let's start with an overview of the challenges that come with this topic to date:

- Live events are back! Associations need to focus on more than recovery. They need to embrace the new way of engaging and delivering value. Across the meetings and hospitality industries there was a loss of event talents, taking time and focus away from other aspects of association life.
- The marketplace has changed. New digital community platforms that were emerging pre-pandemic have strengthened and eaten part of the associations’ pie.
- Industry sponsors started, out of sheer need during the pandemic, experimenting with their own activities. Now they want to retain the momentum and continue moving to live, free engagement should continue 365/24/7 instead of only during the traditional event – from start to finish.

NECESSARY STEPS

With the above and more challenges, associations need to dive head on into making investments into transitioning the organization. On the positive side, digital acceptance has increased dramatically, as long as it is short and precise.

According to MCI’s 2022 Association Engagement Index, a global benchmark study of 50+ associations across the world, we learn that members are asking for choice. Choice in communication, multiple channels and choice in engagement. The more choice, the more engagement is increasing. It’s all about the right channel for the right activity. Often referred to as 02020 – Online to Offline. Where the objective is that learning conversations and engagement should continue 365/24/7 instead of only the traditional event – from start to finish.

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