



## Associations: A Brief Overview

“Associations provide a platform in which groups of people with shared dreams and concerns can work together to shape their future. Because they influence nearly every industry, profession and social issue, associations have the power to transform our nation and the world.”

-From ASAE& The Center's  
*Strategies for Transformation*

### How associations affect society:

- Political Landscape:
  - Lobbying in the interest of your association.
- Social Awareness:
  - Research and Awareness Campaigns.
- Professional Excellence:
  - Professional Certifications.
- The Economy:
  - Contributions that positively affect the economy.

### The different types of associations:

- Professional Societies
  - Specific to professions &/or careers.
  - Strive to advance the bodies of knowledge of their field.
  - Individual Memberships.
- Philanthropic Organizations
  - Charitable cause.
  - Maybe termed community, health, arts and public service organizations.
  - Most do not offer memberships.
- Trade Associations
  - Specific to industry.
  - Represent a group of business firms.
  - Corporate/Organization Memberships.

### Why do people join/participate in associations?

- Organizations and/or Companies join Trade Associations in order to promote public awareness and positive views for their specific industry. They also strengthen Government Relations by lobbying for the industry's best interests.
- Individuals join Professional Societies for professional development (educational classes and certifications), as well as networking purposes.
- People who are involved in Philanthropic Organizations all have the same belief in a particular cause and raise money for research funding.

### The Structure and Roles in Associations

- Associations are headed by a Board of Directors which sets forth the direction and guiding principles for the organization as well as sets the direction in which the staff of the organization should work.
- There are generally different Committees and Volunteers who contribute to a specific area or project within the organization.

## Trends in Associations

- Boards have a greater focus on ethical issues than in the past.
- Associations are facing more competition in producing products, and services.

## Staff Departments and Their Functions

- Education
  - Majority of post-university education is provided by associations.
  - Many provide certification and/or licensing.
  - Real-time conferences and seminars, online learning.
- Government Relations
  - Represents interests of the industry/profession/cause in local, regional, and national political forums through
    - Grass-roots advocacy
    - Monitoring Legislation
    - Political Action Committees
- Publications
  - Association Newsletters
  - Technical Publications
  - Technical Journals
  - Training Manuals
  - Industry Magazines
- Communications/Public Relations
  - Promote positive image of the association to both internal and external audiences.
  - Keep the organization on a consistent overall message.
- Information Technology
  - Development and maintenance of website content.
  - Maintenance of database systems.
  - Administration of internal network and desktop computing systems.
- Planning for future implementation of technology to move the organization forward.
- Membership
  - Particularly for trade associations, membership dues are a large part of annual revenues.
  - Prospecting, recruiting, orientation, involvement, renewal.
  - Face-to-face networking.
  - Often coordinates volunteer committees and election processes.
  - Marketing of association products and services.
- Finance and Administration
  - Develops and monitors association operating budgets.
  - Manages association investments.
  - Administers association benefits programs and other human resource programs/issues.
- Research/Standards Setting
  - Reports, industry information
  - Industry/Benchmarking Statistics
  - Self-regulation
  - Endorsements/Certifications
- Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
  - Determines the overall direction of the association in partnership with the Board.
  - Serves as the major spokesperson for the association and the industry/profession it serves.
  - Determines the “personality” of the association.
  - Takes ultimate responsibility for the performance of the organization.