

Looking for money in all the right places

DUES VS. NONDUES – WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR REVENUE? For many years, association budgets were based mostly on dues payments. Then, for some years, the nondues model took over and associations built their products and services according to how much revenue was generated from each of them. Oh, that's a bit simplified but, basically, it was "how much can we make?" that decided if a program or event was part of the plan.



Straightforward
Jill M. Cornish, IOM

But many associations still rely *primarily* on member dues. If your members are not willing to pay the association for the products and services you provide, you are not listening to them. Especially right now, when members are *demanding* value. Do you know what, *exactly*, your members want, or are you relying on a years-old survey that shows the magazine (*what* magazine?) at the top of the what-we- like list? If your members are not willing to pay for it, in good times and bad, then you are offering the wrong services. Stop wasting your time in all the wrong places and focus on the Top Three – in most cases, advocacy, education and information.

THOSE NONDUES REVENUE SOURCES that you do have should not be merely products and services advertised or displayed to members for which companies have paid a sponsorship fee to the association. If you are going to offer the product, you must accept the responsibility to be certain the product does what the company advertises. A *Good Housekeeping*-type seal of approval from the association should mean that the product or service is *excellent*, not just available. Your members want to know that you are looking out for their best interests, and the association's stamp of approval is *not* for sale.

LAST WEEK, NONDUES STRATEGIST NANCY FREDÉ presented creative ways to generate new revenue through the use of customized crossword puzzles and game shows. Frede, hosted by the Virginia Society of Association Executives (www.vsae.org) in Richmond, worked with association professionals to find sponsors for category answer squares, generate excitement and educate members. Frede's custom versions of a popular clue and question game show allow associations and their foundations to implement additional opportunities for sponsorships at all donor levels. Details: nfrede@aol.com or www.nonduesrevenue.com.

YOUR CONVENTION AND TRADE SHOW are most likely the association's largest source of nondues revenue. But you may not be getting all the revenue you deserve from those exhibits. Are you charging premiums for special locations, aisle ends, corners, islands? Do you sell additional registrations to exhibitors who want more booth coverage or request a spot near the buffet? If you turn your show over to an outside vendor, one who then sells products and services to your booth-buyers, you may have lost control of your revenue. TradeShow Logistics, www.TradeShowLogistics.com, an Atlanta-based company with industry-experienced management, has another approach to helping associations get more money from their shows. A recent visit to the tradeshow floor at the Washington Convention Center gave me the opportunity to talk with some of an association's happy exhibitors. Many of them said the same issues were usual problems at shows: not having a single point of contact; having to fill out orders many times over for a variety of services; not getting the items they ordered and having no one to ask when they arrived in the booth; being overcharged for shipping and setup, etc. According to Charlie Robinson, TradeShow Logistics VP, and company president BJ Enright, they focus on the host association and the exhibitor. Their company handles products and subcontracts, under the direction of the association's show manager. The association determines the suppliers and the target revenue. It is a different, more association- controlled and planned process that might provide more revenue for your association.

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