

Top Association Management Predictions for 2017

From 13 Experts



About The Author



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As the Director of Content, Branding & Buzz at Aptify, Jen oversees the strategy and execution of brand management and content production across the organization's global offices. She thrives on bringing compelling content and useful information to associations to help them grow and engage their membership. She's also an avid fan of mid-century modern design and all things science fiction.

Table Of Contents

- 4 Looking Ahead
- 5 Online Learning / *Mary Byers*
- 7 Embracing “Sales” / *Wes Trochlil*
- 9 Member Engagement / *Elizabeth Weaver Engel*
- 11 Membership Growth & Models, & Inbound Marketing / *Tony Rossell*
- 14 Real Innovation / *Jamie Notter*
- 16 The Role of Culture / *Maddie Grant*
- 18 The Unbundling of the AMS / *John Mancini*
- 20 The Year of Foresight / *Jeff De Cagna*
- 22 Data & Decision Making / *Loretta Monterastelli DeLuca*
- 25 Playing to Your Association’s Strengths / *Deirdre Reid*
- 28 New Business Models / *Amith Nagarajan*
- 30 Mergers & Acquisitions / *Teri Carden*
- 33 Change Adoption / *Sarah Sladek*

Looking Ahead

With every new year comes a **new beginning**.

For the Association Management Software (AMS) industry, which continues to evolve and change, it often means new goals, new product strategies, and exciting new opportunities to deliver member value and deepen relationships between associations and their members.

As 2016 comes to an end, I've reached out to some highly respected influencers and followers of the association space to give their predictions on what the new year will bring to our growing industry, and collected them in this book.

From improving member engagement and developing new business models, to adopting marketing demands of the association world, their words are both educational and inspirational, and I'm grateful for their contribution.

Looking ahead, 2017 will prove to be a time of unmatched growth and innovation for associations who prepare for it. Take the time to review and implement these great suggestions provided in this book to help your organization achieve a successful year.

Enjoy Reading!

Jen Barrell
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Online Learning

Quote By: Mary Byers





MARY BYERS

Mary Byers, CAE, is co-author of *Race for Relevance: Five Radical Changes for Associations* and *Road to Relevance: 5 Strategies for Competitive Associations*. She specializes in working with volunteer association leaders and chief staff executives to help define their roles and clarify their vision through leadership conference programming, facilitating strategic planning retreats and CEO coaching.

Associations should focus on helping members work less stressfully, more profitably and more productively in the online learning arena.

TWEET THIS



The move to online learning (in addition to face-to-face) will continue to accelerate. Associations need a strategy for this – along with a robust learning management system to support professional development for members. With more and more students completing undergraduate work online, it will be a member expectation in the future.

We'll see changes, however. The traditional hour-long webinar will give way to shorter learning opportunities and learning paths will be comprised of on-demand videos viewed at the learner's convenience. "Micro-classes" dedicated to very specific topics will make it easier for members to access learning without leaving home while allowing associations to show their value as they help members address pain points through videos similar to TED talks. Associations should focus on helping members work less stressfully, more profitably and more productively in the online learning arena.



Embracing “Sales”

Quote By: Wes Trochlil



For over 25 years, Wes has worked in and with nearly 200 associations, nonprofits, and membership organizations throughout the US, Canada, and Australia. Having written over 100 articles and hundreds of blog posts, Wes is the most published author on data management in the association market. In addition to his articles, Wes is also the author of the book *Put Your Data to Work: 52 Tips and Techniques for Effectively Managing Your Database*, published by ASAE.



WES TROCHLIL

In 2017, associations will finally discover that “sales” is not a dirty word.

TWEET THIS

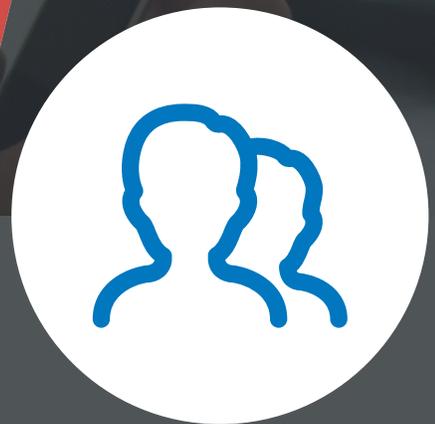


Associations will finally discover that “sales” is not a dirty word.

Selling is required to keep your association alive, even if it’s limited only to selling membership (and let’s face it, most associations sell many more things than just membership). So that means associations will have to review the people, processes, and technology they currently have in place, to ensure that all three will support this new paradigm of selling. People who aren’t afraid to ask someone to buy something, processes that support selling, and technology that improves broad management of the sales process. We all sell, every day. Associations are finally starting to embrace it.

Member Engagement

*Quote By: Elizabeth Weaver
Engel*





**ELIZABETH
WEAVER ENGEL**

Elizabeth Weaver Engel, M.A., CAE, is CEO and Chief Strategist at Spark Consulting LLC. Elizabeth has more than nineteen years of experience helping associations grow, in membership, marketing, communications, public presence, and especially revenue, which is what Spark is all about. She speaks and writes frequently on a variety of topics in association management. When she's not helping associations grow, Elizabeth loves to dance, listen to live music, cook, and blog about the Philadelphia Eagles.

We've all been on the receiving end of clumsy attempts to do targeted marketing, so we all know how annoying and off-putting it can be.

My answer is more a wish than a projection, but I would like to see associations move away from a simplistic use of data to "segment" and "target" members and other audiences based on very broad and often inaccurate categories and begin treating them as real people with whom we have real relationships.

That means we get to know them as individuals, seek to understand their most important goals and most pressing problems, and provide solutions that make our associations vital partners in their personal and professional success.



Membership Growth & Models, & Inbound Marketing

Quote By: Tony Rossell



Tony Rossell serves as the Senior Vice President at Marketing General Incorporated in Alexandria, Virginia. A frequent writer and speaker on marketing topics, he is a contributing author to two books, *Membership Marketing* (ASAE) and *Membership Essentials* (ASAE). He also launched the annual Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report and developed the membership framework he calls the "Membership Lifecycle." Tony can be reached at Tony@MarketingGeneral.com.



TONY ROSSELL

In 2017, membership will continue to be the glue that enhances networking, information distribution, and sales for associations.

TWEET THIS



1. Continuing Membership Growth – For the eighth consecutive year, according to the 2016 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report, the number of associations reporting an increase in membership counts (49%) has substantially surpassed the number reporting a decline in membership (22%). In 2017, membership will continue to be the glue that enhances networking, information distribution, and sales for associations.

In 2017, many associations will evaluate and adjust their membership product to meet the changing needs in the marketplace.

TWEET THIS



2. Evolving Membership Models – Over the last few years, many associations have re-evaluated and changed their membership model by creating tiered membership structures or hybrid memberships. In 2017, many associations will evaluate and adjust their membership product to meet the changing needs in the marketplace.

3. Adding Online Inbound Marketing – Because they have so much content to share and very defined audiences, inbound marketing is an ideal channel for associations. In 2017, in order to build worldwide awareness and demonstrate relevance, associations will rapidly adopt this channel as part of their existing marketing mix.

Real Innovation

Quote By: Jamie Notter





JAMIE NOTTER

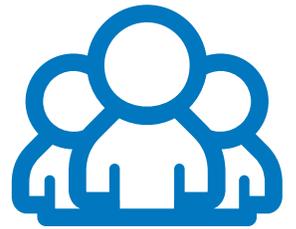
Jamie Notter is a founding partner at WorkXO, where he helps leaders drive growth through cultural alignment. He brings 25 years of experience in conflict resolution, generational differences, leadership, and culture change to his consulting and speaking. Author of *When Millennials Take Over*, and *Humanize*, Jamie Notter serves as adjunct faculty at Georgetown University.

You may not like this answer, but I predict association management in 2017 will look pretty much like it did in 2016—and 2006, for that matter.

I am one of many people who have been calling for real innovation in this community for a long time now, but only a scarce few, quite frankly, have answered the call. I am truly excited about the work being done by this minority of associations, and I am actively inviting more to join us on this path toward the future, but I am no longer waiting for “association management” to change.

The Role of Culture

Quote By: Maddie Grant



Maddie Grant is an expert digital strategist and thought leader who has helped hundreds of organizations engage with their customer base and build capacity for using social media and online communities to achieve business results. Her recent consulting work focuses on digital transformation and internal and external engagement. In addition to her culture work through WorkXO, Maddie is Editor of SocialFish, one of the most visited and respected blogs written for nonprofit and association executives. She is ALWAYS working on her next book, and the two she wrote with Jamie Notter (*Humanize* in 2011 and *When Millennials Take Over* in 2015) are clearly just the beginning.



MADDIE GRANT

Association management in 2017 will continue a burgeoning trend of organizations beginning to understand how much culture plays into the success or failure of technology implementations.

We are seeing this issue come up again and again in everything from small technology projects to system-wide digital transformation initiatives, and that trend will start to result in more attention to culture change BEFORE implementation, instead of afterwards to reveal the cause of failures or lessons learned.

The Unbundling of the AMS

Quote By: John Mancini





JOHN MANCINI

John Mancini is an author, keynote, blogger and respected leader of the AIIM global community of information professionals. He believes that in the next 5 years, a wave of Digital Transformation will sweep through businesses and organizations, and organizations now face a fundamental choice between Information Opportunity and Information Chaos.

During the past decade, associations spent endless cycles working with their AMS providers to add more and more process capabilities and customizations to their AMS platform.

Well, as a result of consumerization, mobile, and the cloud, we're now back in a best-of-breed environment. Business leaders within associations are seeking THEIR OWN solutions, often independent of IT, and frequently finding them with process-specific SaaS providers.

So 2017 is the year to rethink some of our core assumptions about AMS solutions, what we expect from them, and how embedded specific processes are in those solutions.

The Year of Foresight

Quote By: Jeff De Cagna



Jeff De Cagna FASAE is chief strategist and founder of Principled Innovation LLC, located in Reston, Virginia. Jeff is a respected contrarian thinker who challenges association boards, CEOs, and other senior decision-makers to prepare their organizations for the future by harnessing the forces of societal transformation. He can be reached at jeff@principledinnovation.com.



JEFF DE CAGNA

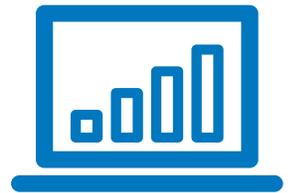
In the words of the late poet Mark Strand, “the future is always beginning now.” For association boards and CEOs thinking ahead to 2017, these six words are a clear call to action.

As the powerful forces of transformation reshaping our world begin to make an even greater impact, associations must soberly explore a full range of plausible futures, including unfavorable and even unthinkable scenarios.

To that end, association decision-makers should declare 2017 as “The Year of Foresight,” the year in which they will commit themselves to the critical work of learning with and preparing both their stakeholders and their organizations for whatever the future might hold.

Data & Decision Making

*Quote By: Loretta
Monterastelli DeLuca*





**LORETTA
MONTERASTELLI
DELUCA**

Loretta M. DeLuca is the founder and co-owner of DelCor Technology Solutions, Inc. The business, initially started in 1984 right out of college, specialized in database development projects and network implementations. In 1987, DelCor began specializing in providing technology management consulting and network systems services to associations and nonprofit organizations. As a member of the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) (23+ years) and the Association Forum of Chicagoland, Loretta is very much involved in the association and nonprofit community. She is the 2015 recipient of ASAE's Academy of Leaders Award and was most recently named Association Trend's 2017 Partner of the Year.

I look forward to a 2017 and beyond when organizations will finally be using their data to make strategic, forward-facing decisions.



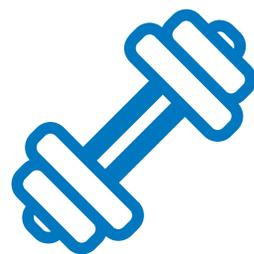
There are a few notable trends in the AMS space, for example, the use of Salesforce and MS CRM as the foundation for building association-specific functionality by several AMS vendors, as well as the shake-up of the industry via acquisitions and VC and PE infusions. But the trend I believe should be most celebrated and that has been the longest awaited (at least by me) is the focus of some of the AMS vendors on data analytics and business intelligence and, more importantly, the increasing embracement of this concept by the association community.

Aside from a building and its reserve funds, data is arguably the most valuable asset an organization owns. For decades, the ability of AMSs to store more and more data has increased exponentially, yet the ability

to extract and manipulate this data to support business planning and decisions has not. Finally, AMS vendors are paying more attention to this functionality within their applications, there are skilled third party providers who focus on data analytics, and the needed software tools are now available. I look forward to a 2017 and beyond when organizations will finally be using their data to make strategic, forward-facing decisions.

Play to Your Association's Strengths

Quote By: Deirdre Reid



Deirdre Reid, CAE, is a freelance and content marketing writer specializing in the association market, and publisher of Association Brain Food, a weekly list of free learning events for the association community.



DEIRDRE REID

In 2017, associations will focus on developing their three most valuable assets: data, staff, and partnerships.



My wishful thinking has always got the better of me when making predictions for associations. This time, I'm placing my bets on three strong inside moves. In 2017, associations will focus on developing their three most valuable assets: data, staff, and partnerships.

Data resourcefulness

Data analytics was the talk of the town in 2016 – the topic of webinars and conference sessions, and the specialty of companies moving into the association space. As we approach 2017, most associations understand that data is one of their most valuable and vulnerable assets.

Associations will get better at using data to learn more about their community and to deliver more value to them. They'll also step up their

efforts to protect the data in their care against growing cybersecurity threats.

Staff development

Everyone on staff will focus on producing value members can't find elsewhere: community, content, education, and consultation. To free up resources, associations will outsource other work: IT infrastructure management, accounting, human resources, design, and meeting logistics.

Associations will stay competitive by investing in their staff's personal and professional growth. They'll help staff develop the mindset and skills that will prepare them for whatever the future holds.

New partnerships

Associations will put their organizational ego aside and partner with others in their community who can help them achieve their mission. For example, they'll work with vendor members to develop new relationship-building and marketing opportunities that deliver value to members and non-dues revenue to the association.



New Business Models

Quote By: Amith Nagarajan





AMITH NAGARAJAN

Amith Nagarajan is the Chairman and CEO of Aptify. The journey he's experienced has surpassed even his own wildest dreams, and he is grateful for the opportunity to work with so many bright and committed team members in advancing the missions of clients around the world. Amith is passionate about Aptify's Core Purpose and Core Values and dedicates a large portion of his time looking for ways to continually improve the company's culture. Prior to founding Aptify, he worked in the R&D laboratories at Hewlett-Packard Company in Palo Alto, California, and graduated from California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, California, with a concentration in Business Administration.

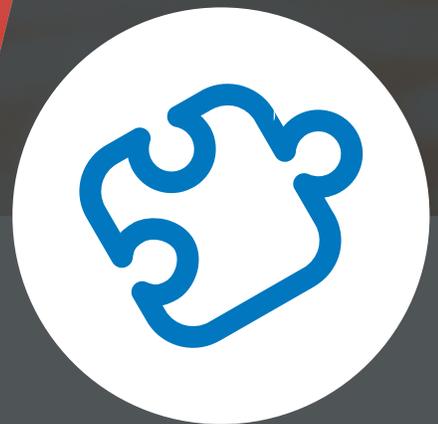
In 2017 the pressure on association executives to adopt new business models will increase.

TWEET THIS



In 2017 the pressure on association executives to adopt new business models will increase. As a response, they'll need to be willing to experiment with new ideas rapidly.

Associations will be looking at ways to engage a broader audience than just their traditional membership. There's an opportunity to create relationships with people who may never convert into membership, but would find value in the content and dialog the association is uniquely able to provide.



Mergers & Acquisitions

Quote By: Teri Carden

Teri Carden is an association tech junkie and self-proclaimed girl geek in normal girl's clothing. Throughout her career as an association executive, she was supported by her mentors, colleagues, volunteer leaders, and bosses to fulfill her incessant desire to geek out on the job. Three years ago Teri answered a need in the association space by founding ReviewMyAMS.com, a trusted site for executives to provide end-user reviews of their association management systems (AMS).



TERI CARDEN

I think we're going to see more mergers and acquisitions in 2017 and we're going to see a lot more interest from outside investors.

TWEET THIS



The AMS world has changed dramatically in the last two years. We're witnessing a movement of portfolio versus core competency. Some AMS companies are merging or acquiring other association business solutions (LMS, email campaign system, online community) situating their business as a suite of services for their clients.

Other AMS vendors are staying true to their roots and maintaining a core competency in data management. This is diversifying the selection process for associations. I think we're going to see more mergers and acquisitions in 2017 and we're going to see a lot more interest from outside investors. Therefore, I think we're going to witness some of our tech vendors experience significant cultural changes (maybe even struggles), but ultimately we'll see substantial product upgrades.

I think we're also going to see more movement with peer-to-peer insights. In the business to consumer world, we have Yelp, Trip Advisor and Angie's List but in the association to business (AtoB) world, we're going to see more of the likes of ReviewMyAMS where end users can air their experiences and buyers can learn from those using the product to make more informed buying decisions. We're going to see a slow rise for the tech company that has the best platform and service, not necessarily the biggest sales and marketing budget.

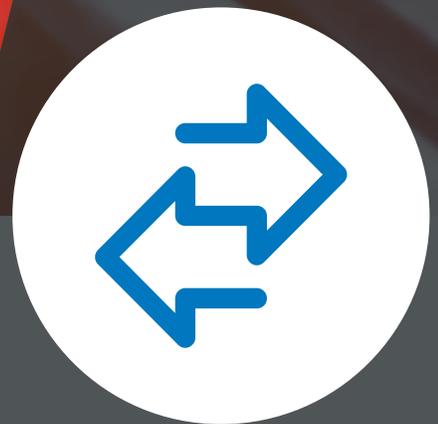
My last prediction is AMS startups. I've seen 5 new AMS platforms pop up in the last year and several who have rebuilt their original infrastructure. I don't think this will slow down with the ease, pace and price of developing new products.

I'm truly excited about the shifts that have happened over the course of the last couple years for the association tech sphere – we're now seeing a lot more uses of tools for Business Intelligence, In-Bound Marketing, SEO for a competitive edge, podcasting and video content creation. But, we've still got a lot of work to do to stay up with what our members expect of us.

Keep on keeping on, association world. I'm rooting for you!

Change Adoption

Quote By: Sarah Sladek





SARAH SLADEK

Sarah Sladek was leading the charge for organizations and companies to adapt to younger generations long before anybody else. Concerned about declining engagement in our nation's membership associations, nonprofits, and workplaces, she founded one of the nation's first generation-focused companies in 2002. XYZ University remains the only generations-focused consulting and strategy firm in North America specialized in helping organizations engage the membership, leadership, and market share of Generations X, Y, and Z.

Amidst significant change — technological, political, demographic, economic — associations are going to find themselves fielding an increase in market demands, and be expected to help their member companies successfully manage and navigate change.

The vast majority of companies, and even entire industries, are struggling to find and keep talent and prepare young professionals for leadership roles. The shift in human capital has been repeatedly cited as the chief concern among global leaders, yet associations have struggled to provide any real guidance or support on the issue.

The role of association management must expand, and in some cases be completely revised, to keep up with these shifts in market demand. This will be a great opportunity for association management professionals, when and if they can be responsive to member needs.

We Want to Hear Your Predictions for 2017

You've seen what the pros have to say, what do you think the new year entails for associations? Use the button below and *leave your comment on our blog.*

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2017

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