

August 2017 Association Tip-of-the-Month

Six Association Management Tips from Steve Jobs

Don't Forget Your Own Expertise Innovation Comes from Within

You should pay attention to your members and your staff. Crowdfund, send out surveys and polls, and talk to your members directly about what type of content and benefits they're interested in. Just don't ask for your members' opinions at the expense of your own expertise. For instance, your members may know that they have a problem advancing their career, but not know how to fix it. You could be the one to show them exactly the type of skills training they need to get ahead. Why? Because you are an expert in your field with valuable contributions.

Be Different

Jobs wasn't shooting for "fine" or "good." He wanted to do something extraordinary. This is great advice for an association leader as well. You are on a valuable mission in a time that's tough on membership organizations. Don't be satisfied with doing well. Do something different. Make people notice. If it works, you're well beyond fine. Even if it doesn't, you've done it in a way no one else has.

Keep Going

Sometimes the challenge in innovation isn't in coming up with the innovative thought but sticking with it and building support. Give your programs, benefits, and long-term strategies the time they need to work. Consistently evaluate your progress with surveys and polls, as well as tracking activity in your membership management software. If any of your efforts don't produce the results you want, don't get discouraged. Look at your data, make improvements, and try again.

Say No

One of the keys to success is prioritizing. You likely have a laundry list of things you'd like to do, but there aren't enough hours in the day to do them all right. Tackle big projects first, putting the majority of your resources into tasks that will prepare your association and its members for the future. Less impactful tasks should come after the essentials are finished. There are some things you shouldn't do, some benefits your members won't like, and some policies that should never be implemented. Use your resources, including activity data on your members and known industry trends, to weed out poor suggestions and focus the projects that are most likely to succeed.

Love What You Do

Associations have missions and because of this they attract people who love what they do and the cause they work for. But when times get tough, that mission can sometimes be hard to remember. Employee turnover, problems attracting millennials, and upgrading benefits to fit today's technology can put so much pressure on your association that your mission slips onto the back burner. When this happens, take a moment to refocus. You joined your association for a reason, and you're managing it in the best way possible, all for the sake of your mission. Remember your purpose and find the joy in your work.

Keep It Simple

Complex soap operas are entertaining, but that's usually where the allure of complexity stops. For everything else, including your benefits, most of your audience will appreciate a clean and simple approach. Members don't want a complex online community or an e-commerce experience. They don't want to dig through your website menus to find what they're looking for. They want a seamless, enjoyable member experience. The problem is that simplicity isn't always easy. There's too much information to squeeze into your educational courses, too many pages in your website, too many members to contact. The only way to achieve it is by making it a priority.