

How the M&E Section Council is Helping You

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The Meetings & Expositions Section Council vice chair gives his view on how the section council can help you succeed in these challenging times for association meetings professionals.

It has been a tumultuous year given the widespread impact of the economy. The trickle-down effect from major hits last fall in the financial world often has felt more like a deluge for meetings and expositions professionals. Now, with experts pointing to improvements ahead, we seem perched on the cusp of new beginnings, standing ready to regain or exceed past levels of success—success that some of us left behind over the past months for the immediate need to mitigate damage, balance operations, and avoid losses.

Yet as things inch back to more stable footing, many associations and companies are seeing the lagging effects of those 2008 tumbles. I can't recall a time in recent years when projected attendance at meetings carried so large a margin for error or when accurate forecasting of programming trends was more crucial.

Beyond doing more with less, which is always our mantra, we are now pushed to do more while our consumers have less—or at least they perceive they do. With spending on seemingly nonessential expenses like professional development being cut, the fiscal pinch the world watched so closely last fall is now hitting many of us hard.

How do we respond when we know association members and meeting attendees are struggling to choose between renewal, education, networking, and so forth, as well as investments in other areas of their professional and personal lives?

Luckily, we've seen from history that financial crises can inspire innovation and spur reflection and planning. This is an area where associations and the meetings industry thrive. Our business is based on building skills, exploring possibilities, identifying and targeting goals, enhancing the tangible and intangible facets within those we serve, and so on.

Now is the time to prepare for the coming decade. The emotional responses and business memory of the current climate will linger in our minds for years to come and "preparedness" will be the watchword moving forward. It is up to us to shine a light on paths for improvement that might not only elevate the here and now but ward against the negatives of an uncertain future.

The Meetings & Expositions Section Council strives to be your resource in these endeavors. Although not specifically tailored for application in times of economic turmoil, our mission fits the current climate very well via dedication "to enhancing the competency, professionalism, and ethical behavior of individuals involved in association meetings and expositions to better serve members and society."

While difficult times may distract us on occasion from other more broad-based programming within our industry, like ASAE & The Center's Social Responsibility initiatives, we all are inextricably linked to goals that move ourselves and our organizations toward greater service and societal advancement.

This section council is a conduit for your energies toward such engagement and fulfillment. With a watchful eye on the future, feet rooted in knowledge garnered from the past, and a thoughtful stance in the here and now, you can find help and information on practically any topic relating to the business of meetings through us as an aid to drive your success. From the [Hotel Operations Program](#) to the [Business of Meetings](#) and every resource provided in between, we continually ask for your input, assess the market, and deliver opportunities for you to capitalize on your potential as an effective agent of change in your organization, department, or self.

In the coming months, we will be taking your recent feedback and incorporating it into our process-oriented approach to strategic planning and producing programs. This provides an opportunity for your voice not only to be heard but to be an integral component of future decision-making that will yield valuable programming relevant in today's environment.

As such, please keep us apprised of how we are doing and what we might do to provide you with even more value as a member of the M&E Section Council. Our Chair Danielle Foisy and I, along with almost 30 other [M&E Section Council volunteer leaders](#), are more than happy to receive your comments and remain open to recommendations for ways to lead on your behalf.

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