



# Building a Resiliency Plan

Five Steps That Associations and Nonprofits Can and Should Take Now





## The Need for a Resiliency Plan

Over the past several years, we have witnessed unprecedented economic growth in the U.S. Association membership was on the rise, attendance at annual tradeshows was solid and engagement was high. But the pandemic changed everything in a matter of months. Organizations have had to scale back operations, postpone or cancel events and make significant changes and decisions on a very quick timeline. And, many are still in the trenches.

A resiliency plan can help your organization not only anticipate but also plan for changes and events that will affect your revenue projections and your bottom line. And this is particularly relevant now. According to the ASAE Research Foundation, 77 percent of associations<sup>2</sup> anticipate the need to use financial reserves to offset revenue losses due to the current global health crisis.



# Developing a Resiliency Plan

It is important to note that resiliency planning is not a one-time activity but rather a continuous cycle of monitoring and evaluating progress and then re-assessing your needs and priorities. A robust plan will support both the short- and long-term sustainability of your organization.

## Here are the building blocks of a resiliency plan for an association or nonprofit:

### 1. Assess risk and vulnerability

First, create a leadership task force made up of individuals across the organization that can contribute to the resiliency plan and highlight things to keep in mind for their respective functions and impact on the business. Do this before making any moves or decisions that will impact your staff and your members. You want to ensure that you have the right people in the room and that it's a group of diverse, representative voices at all levels of the organization.



With your task force, hold a series of discussions where you evaluate your organization's bottom line, look at where membership revenue and renewals stand today, revisit your mission and vision, identify vulnerabilities that have arisen as a result of COVID-19, and review how you are engaging stakeholders to address these challenges.

Consider sending a survey to members to understand which programs, activities and events they want to take advantage of now to help determine changes to staffing and your budget.



## 2. Plan and prioritize

Once you have an understanding of your organization's vulnerabilities, challenges and opportunities, prioritize the strategies and potential actions to address those issues.

For example, has membership suffered in recent months? If so, do you offer a payment plan to members and does it make sense to offer a free one-year extension to people who have lost their jobs? Are you taking your meetings and annual conference virtual<sup>3</sup>? What percent of revenue do in-person events account for? The ASAE Research Foundation found that 71 percent of associations<sup>4</sup> have cancelled at least one event in 2020 and more than a third have cancelled three or more events. Do you need to spin up digital solutions to offset the lack of events taking place this year to reaffirm the value that you offer to members?

Develop short- and long-term priorities for each area of your business that takes today's economic environment and public health concerns into account, and your expectations for these a year or two from now.



# 71%

of associations have cancelled  
at least one event in 2020  
and more than a third have  
cancelled three or more events.





### 3. Reshape Your Strategy

Most associations and nonprofits have experienced significant disruption to business-as-usual operations and will continue to do so while we are living with COVID-19. To help address these challenges, consider these actions:

#### **Evaluate short-term liquidity.**

Your finance team is likely evaluating cash flow and working capital to understand how the pandemic has affected the growth of the organization. Monitor short-term cash flow and maintain a strict discipline around collecting receivables. According to the ASAE Research Foundation, 56 percent of associations<sup>5</sup> anticipated a decrease in revenue from conferences, meetings and events in FY 2020 and 36% anticipated a decrease in FY 2021.

If you don't offer a payment plan, consider adding this option to increase recurring revenue and provide flexibility for your members.

#### **Assess financial and operational risks.**

Associations should monitor increases in their direct costs and the impact to overall margins. Look to re-negotiate terms with vendors or lock in pricing for longer periods to provide stability for your organization. Explore solutions that can offset losses in membership revenue such as online learning, virtual events and more. Evaluate your organization's technical debt and how your technology stack enables or prevents operational flexibility and efficiency.

#### **Determine how the pandemic affects budgets and business plans.**

Organizations should stress-test their financial plans for multiple scenarios to understand the effects on economic performance and any long-term impacts. If you've had to furlough staff at your organization, will you be able to reinstate these positions in late 2020 or early 2021 given your current cash flow expectations? When you're able to return to the office, what percent of staff will continue working from home? And, does this affect the real estate needs of your organization? Should you budget for a hybrid conference option in 2021 to ensure that you'll recoup attendance and sponsorship revenue even if members cannot meet face-to-face? The stress test for your financial can help you prepare for any difficult decisions before they happen and ensure alignment on priorities across your organization.



#### 4. Communicate with Stakeholders

Clear, transparent and timely communication is crucial when developing a plan to reshape your organization and to secure ongoing support from members, staff, partners, suppliers, your board of directors and more. Share updates regularly as policies change and as you are putting any programs or activities on pause and introducing new ones.

Revisit the survey that you sent to members and create targeted messaging based on their previous engagement. For example, if you are creating virtual coffee chats to replace a monthly networking event, send targeted messaging to members who have participated in networking events over the past six months and let them know about the changes. Also, share the activities broadly to encourage participation from people who may not have been able to previously join due to time conflicts or geographical limitations.

Share regular updates to members in your member newsletter or in weekly emails that detail changes to membership dues and renewals, the addition of digital programming or virtual events, plans to postpone in-person meetings and networking activities and more.



## 5. Monitor, evaluate, and adapt

If there is a silver lining for the current environment, it offers an opportunity for reflection and a chance to evaluate what's working and what's not. To reiterate, this isn't a one-time activity. Continually monitor and re-assess your efforts throughout this pandemic and afterwards.

Consider both internal and external cues to understand when your strategy needs to change and evolve. Internal cues include staff sentiment for going back into the office, the number of staff needed in a particular facility or area and which programs and services can be delivered virtually. External cues include local and state restrictions around gathering, whether cases are declining or increasing along with the availability of testing and hospital capacity in your area. As these numbers and information change, update your plans accordingly.



# How Association Clients Are Adapting

Several of Personify's clients shared their experiences in a new series on Associations Now about driving resiliency through technology. Here are some highlights from their stories.





### Taking A Data-Driven Approach: The American Optometric Association

When the pandemic first started, the American Optometric Association (AOA) knew that the first thing their members would need is information on navigating this new normal of health care, including everything from getting set up for telemedicine visits to applying to Paycheck Protection Program Loans. Utilizing Personify360, the AOA hosted instructional webinars for their members and non-members and offered them to anyone seeking information, regardless of their membership status. Additionally, the AOA recognized the economic hit doctors would take from not being able to see patients and decided to waive members' fees for two months. And believe it or not, it was hardly as easy as it sounds.

*"Our finance team and our IT staff met on a daily basis to figure out how we could do it and track it," said Adam Reider, Manager of Technical Training & Support at the AOA. "With technology in place and collaboration from the team, we found a way to roll this out smoothly for all of our 54 affiliates—plus extending it to new members. Any doctor that joins this year is eligible for that two-month waiver."*

Having all of their information in one system allowed the AOA to be proactive and effective. "Technology is our digital truth," said Reider, "it unites all of our affiliates and allows them to work together." As doctors sign up for AOA's webinars, they collect that information and pull it back into their member database to plan topics for future webinars, understand how to promote them, and which ones are more engaging for members and for non-members.





## The Power of Connections:

### The National Association for Home Care & Hospice

The National Association for Home Care & Hospice (NAHC) hosts their annual financial conference in July each year. They had been hard at work creating content surrounding the big issues facing the industry when the lockdown occurred and felt a duty to provide guidance to its members. "We decided that it is vital for us to hold the conference," said Scott Baum, NAHC's Senior Director of Meetings.

Using Personify A2Z Events as the centralized platform, NAHC produced a virtual four-day event: two days of education and general sessions and two days of expo. Having everything in one place, on one platform, made a very challenging situation much more manageable. This meant fewer third-party systems to connect to, less explaining to users how and where to access information, and less chance for important things to fall through the cracks.

Baum and his team added a matchmaking suite that collects demographic information on attendees and exhibitors. "So instead of exhibitors fishing through the 500 attendees, they're able to narrow it down to the 25 they really want to connect with. 'Oh, this person has purchasing authority, has the size agency I'm looking for and they're interested in my product.'" Since people can't wander around a virtual expo, this functionality allows exhibitors to communicate directly with attendees, maximizing everybody's efficiency.

***"In most emergency situations, event planners are working to find a 'make-do' solution— anything just to get by," said Baum. "But with these products at our disposal, I feel like we're going to be able to produce an experience for the attendees, faculty members and exhibitors that is going to be as good — if not better — than what they'd get face to face."***





### Listening Before Taking Action: The National Association of Secondary Principals

For the National Association of Secondary Principals (NASSP), the impact of the lockdown was felt immediately from all sides of their operation. "We were balancing two things," explains Dennis Sadler, NASSP's Deputy Executive Director for Operations. "One was recognizing the challenge that every principal across the United States was dealing with in having to shut down their schools and switch to remote learning for their students. And the other part was figuring out how to support our own staff so that we could keep operating effectively."

According to Sadler, a mistake that some associations make is to develop products, services and experiences in a vacuum, and then try to convince people why they need to buy it. NASSP listens to members first and looks for opportunities where they can meet a need or solve a problem.

Executive directors had shared with NASSP staff that they loved the annual event, but wished they could collaborate more frequently and with people who worked at different levels.

***"We started thinking internally about how to meet this need, and eventually landed on a no-brainer solution: 'Why don't we build an online community for our state affiliates?' We pitched that idea to 10 of the 51 executive directors and they loved it," explains Sadler.***

NASSP began piloting the online experience powered by Personify Community and the response has been tremendous. "It's given us the opportunity to bring disparate, unconnected buckets together in the association and centralize them in this community," says Sadler. "And from organizing virtual conferences to sharing responses to the George Floyd murder, it has fostered real collaboration."



# Wrapping Up

We know this challenging time has created new and unique challenges in engaging with members, managing financials and driving your organization forward. Personify is committed to helping you adapt and emerge from COVID-19 or any crisis, more connected and resilient than ever. Our trusted solutions help you manage during and through these times with digital connections, virtual programming, a single source of truth for your data, and peace of mind for your members.



# About Personify

A trusted solution that allows for infinite possibilities, Personify is the technology foundation that provides insights to maximize engagement and deliver value across each and every interaction with members, donors, volunteers, attendees, exhibitors and more. For over 20 years, Personify has been a trusted partner to associations, nonprofits, show organizers, YMCAs and JCCs—helping them maximize engagement, improve insights, optimize operations, increase revenue and drive productivity.

For more information, visit [www.personifycorp.com](http://www.personifycorp.com).



# References

- <sup>1</sup> New York Times, "Coronavirus in the U.S.: Latest Map and Case Count," Updated July 9, 2020.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-us-cases.html>
- <sup>2</sup> ASAE Research Foundation, "Issue Roundup: Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)", 2020.  
<https://www.asaecenter.org/resources/roundup/issue-roundup-coronavirus>
- <sup>3</sup> Personify Infographic, "Going Virtual: Considerations for Associations and Nonprofits in Transitioning their Events and Annual Conference," 2020.  
<https://personifycorp.com/resources/infographics/going-virtual>
- <sup>4</sup> ASAE Research Foundation, Association Impact Snapshot, May 15, 2020.  
[https://data.surveygizmo.com/r/687924\\_5eb96b6c9d65d4.00687929](https://data.surveygizmo.com/r/687924_5eb96b6c9d65d4.00687929)
- <sup>5</sup> ASAE Research Foundation, Association Impact Snapshot, May 15, 2020.  
[https://data.surveygizmo.com/r/687924\\_5eb96b6c9d65d4.00687929](https://data.surveygizmo.com/r/687924_5eb96b6c9d65d4.00687929)



# Ready to learn more?

[Request a Demo](#)



© 2020 Personify, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

[personifycorp.com](https://personifycorp.com)