

Enhancing the AMC-Client Relationship

***AMC Connection*, June 2009**

Released last summer, *Designing Your Future* offers new future-focused trends research for associations. What value does this research have for an AMC? What's different about this research project? Find out more about the publication and suggestions on implementing its findings in your own AMC.

Many of us have been around the nonprofit community long enough to have seen a variety of future-focused tools come to market. You may be asking yourself, "What's different about the [*Designing Your Future*](#) research project?" Below we'll help you gain a better understanding of what is under the hood of this new publication.

Understanding the Life-Cycle of Your Organization

Before you introduce this new trends research to your client association's leadership, it's vital to spend some time reflecting on the current life-cycle of your organization.

This big-picture understanding of your organization is a critical component in the process of *how* to introduce this trends research to your client. Associations in the infancy or early development stage may require a slower introduction, while organizations that are well established may be eager and ready to receive the information. Very mature organizations may critically need the trends research to help them understand the external changes that will perhaps help them recreate themselves.

Enhancing the Relationship Role for the AMC Owner

AMC leaders are often challenged with figuring out how the latest research material has relevance to the clients that they lead. Often AMCs already face scope creep and fear that adding one more new project to the plate could push their internal teams over the edge or upset the financial relationship between the client and the AMC.

Consider delivering new research information as a method of engaging the AMC owner with the client organization. As AMCs grow and client relationships mature, they often shift the majority of the AMC/client relationship to the executive director. The client bonds more with the executive director and not the AMC; thus, if the executive director transitions out of your AMC, the client could begin to consider a search. The relationship needs to be balanced between the value of the AMC and the value of the day-to-day ties to their executive director. Introducing and engaging your client leadership with new nonprofit research is a perfect way to demonstrate the value of your AMC and enhance your relationship as the owner.

How might you assist in developing a change-ready organization?

- Acknowledge that the only guarantee is that fundamental shifts are happening and will continue to happen.
- Help your leadership learn to live with handling uncertainty by making it a core part of your organization's strategic thinking.
- Continue to ask the "what if" questions about your core assumptions.

If your volunteer leaders routinely embrace strategic planning, how does this fit into your process?

Designing Your Future recognizes that associations may have existing processes for strategic and operational planning. The publication is meant to complement your current approach. It is silly to think that your association can continue with a strategic planning methodology that is void of future trends. Your job is to develop the best method of incorporating a review and discussion on the significant trends that can and will have an impact on the future of your organization!

How might you use this tool at your AMC?

- Hold "brown bag lunches" with your key account staff to discuss a major trend; synopsise results and share with client boards/leadership.
- Survey volunteer leadership asking for top three trends affecting their organization, cross-tab results, and produce a whitepaper to share with clients.
- Focus on one or two key trends across all board meetings and synopsise results to share with all client leaders.
- Prepare newsletter articles across all/most clients focusing on a "trend of the quarter" based on survey and discussion results.
- To gain member input, consider creating a six-foot foam board poster of the 50 trends and having the list stand near your registration desk. Ask registrants to rate their top five trends by using colored dots. This exercise will most likely provide affirmation that the volunteer leaders are on the same page as the membership.
- **What is the next step?** Some trends will be more relevant to your organization than others. Be selective and analytical. Identify resulting implications for your association, and proceed with your strategic planning in light of the trends impact. It is essential to continually monitor changes and revisit trends during your strategic conversations.

The choice is simple. Do you want to be a recipient of the future, or an active participant in designing it?

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Major Components of *Designing Your Future*

The 50 Key Trends

There are 50 key trends over the next five years that will significantly impact the national and global landscape. The profile of each trend includes a description, timeframe, potential impact, implications and opportunities for associations, functional implications and opportunities, example industry implications, and sources and additional references.

The 10 Patterns of Change

Although the trends are important individually, they also converge to form a number of distinct, higher-level “patterns of change” that will affect the individual, society, business, nation, and world. Each pattern is linked to relevant key trends by number, identifies key implications and opportunities for associations, and also walks the reader through the key strategic challenges for associations that result from each change pattern.

The 10 Key Strategic Challenges

Each change pattern contributes to multiple challenges facing organizations. The strategic challenges help an organization address issues such as how to envision tomorrow’s association; serving an aging, multi-generational, and ethnically diverse population; and staying responsive and solvent.

Critical Strategic Questions for Leaders

- **Why are we here?** Purpose, strategic direction, and vision;
- **What will we do?** Core products and service offerings;
- **How will we do it?** Service delivery model;
- **How should we organize ourselves?** Organization model.