

**Light a Fire Under Your Education:  
30 HOT Tips to Boost Your  
Association's Education**



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**Association Education Should...**

- Light a fire under participants to engage them in the meeting and organization overall
- Fuel the fire to maintain their interest – make them want to attend more
- Keep the fire burning...so they (and you!) don't fizzle out.
- Increase revenue!



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**Learning Objectives For This Session**

- To discuss the importance of content elements in every association's meetings
- To provide you with a framework in which you should work to develop your educational meetings
- To enhance what you are already doing and underscore what is really important



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### Our Favorite Education Quote...

“Education is not the filling of a pail,  
but the lighting of a fire!”

- William Butler Yeats



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### Our Education Philosophy...

Good Education (WHAT) =  
Good Meetings (WHY and WHERE) =  
Good Business for Associations (\$\$\$\$)

No margin ... no mission



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We will use this core framework as we offer  
you 30 HOT tips:

1. Needs Assessment & Research
2. Demographics
3. The Plan
4. Program Dynamics & Topic Identification
5. Instructor Vetting, Selection & Preparation
6. Instructional Methodology
7. Marketing
8. Program Delivery



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**This is not your father's Oldsmobile!**

Nor is it your father's association market.  
EVERYTHING is different. This is the economic  
9/11 – out with the old, "NIMBLE" is the new  
"PROCESS"!!!



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**Needs Assessment & Research**  
(In other words ... DO YOUR HOMEWORK!)



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**Needs Assessment is crucial.**

"We don't see things as they are,  
we see things as we are."

(Attributed to Anais Nin, French-born  
American writer, 1903-1977.)



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### Hot Tip #1

#### Know your competitors and their content.



- Vendors and other for-profit entities offer education, and they'll gladly take money off your table.
- Set up a Google Alert with key words on your association's content. You'll get messages each day and can react or float them by your experts.
- Keep all staff informed of these issues.



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### Hot Tip #2

#### Re-examine secondary research instruments that exist in-house.



- Member needs assessment reports
- Education committee meeting minutes
- Other committee minutes – editorial, products and services, customer satisfaction, etc.
- Program and meeting evaluations – use them as living, breathing needs assessment along the way



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### Hot Tip #3

#### Chat with Industry Experts.



- Do not rely solely on board and/or committee members (*or strictly members at all*) to learn the hottest and most pressing issues for your specific industry.
- Form your own personal hip-pocket, out-of-the-box group of stargazers!



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### Hot Tip #4



Conduct an education needs assessment at least once a year.

- Associations are afraid to “over survey”... survey various segments to combat that.
- Include questions specific to meetings.
- KEY: Ask questions that will provide meaningful, actionable responses and TELL members when you use their feedback!



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### Hot Tip #5



Past practice + expressed needs = **HOMERUN!**

- Examine past behaviors relative to educational programming and education meetings.
- Your survey data should not be looked at in a vacuum.
- Taking past practice into account in looking at needs assessment is critical to *context*.



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### Hot Tip #6



Determine what’s driving buying decisions.

•Ask attendees what factors they consider when choosing to attend educational events:

- |              |                    |
|--------------|--------------------|
| ▪ Cost       | ▪ Length of course |
| ▪ Location   | ▪ Content          |
| ▪ CE credits | ▪ Time of year     |
|              | ▪ Venue            |



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## Hot Tip #7



### BE NIMBLE!

- Re-examine your entire process for program development.
- *Process* takes a back seat to *innovation* now.
- Be sure you have the ability to adjust your programming year to incorporate hot topics/new legislation and other late breaking news that members want and will pay for.



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## Association Demographics

### The Key to the Kingdom!



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## Hot Tip #8



### Understand your association demographics!

- In any needs assessment, ask plenty of demographic questions and cross-tab data as much as possible!
- If your database captures this, but you cannot match it with member needs, it is not helping you as much as you need it to.



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### Hot Tip #9



Mine further into the association.

- In *trade associations*, do not simply ask information about key points of contact; ask about their colleagues, staffs and others!
- This is a prime opportunity to understand more about how you can mine more deeply into the organization.



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### Hot Tip #10



Lay these elements on top of each other to determine *areas of opportunity*:

- Association demographics
- Expressed needs
- Current offerings

This leads you to . . .



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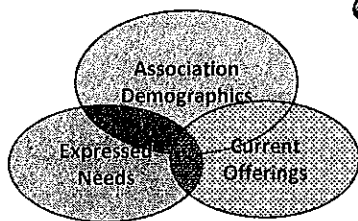
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**The Plan!**



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### Hot Tip #11



#### Something old, something new

- The best educational portfolios have tried and true subject matter that stands the test of time, and...
- New content related to new innovations, legislation, economy, etc.
- Maintain evergreen topics as well!



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### Hot Tip #12



#### Always consider what is going in the world at large.

- Did 9/11 have an impact on your members' business?
- Did the Tsunami?
- What about the current state of the economy?
- The REBOUND of the economy in 2010???



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### Hot Tip #13



#### Make data-driven decisions about your programming.

- Once you have good solid data, use it and refer to it.
- Tell members "You have asked for it ... we will deliver it!"
- Having data from members can supersede bad decisions by board and committee members.



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## Program Dynamics & Topic Identification



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### Hot Tip #14

#### Geographical Content



- Don't just ask "Where are my members geographically?"
- Find out if your association has content differences related to geographic location and plan accordingly.
- As you adjust your **meeting sites** geographically, **content** may need to adjust as well



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### Hot Tip #15

#### It is never too late to use intelligence from the membership!

- Even if your program year is planned, pay attention to what your members are saying they want.
- Be fluid. Make adjustments along the way.



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### Hot Tip #16



Support the concept of a *continuum of learning*.

- This keeps members committed to you and the profession.
- Use a program grid to ensure programming aligns appropriately with membership and market segmentation. Most of the time they do not!



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### Program Grid Example

	% of Education Courses Currently Offered	% of Membership
Newer Members	25	40
Mid-level Members	40	10
Senior Members	35	50

*They don't match up!*



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### Hot Tip #17



Find out the "bread and butter" issues critical to your members **RIGHT NOW**.

- Weave those topic areas into every course.
- Some suggestions:
  - market and consumer trends
  - recent legislative/government regulations
  - financial concerns/issues & the economy
  - environmental impact of industry practices



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## Hot Tip #18



### Adult learners **NEED** interaction.

- Put a practice in place whereby each course should have an interactive component for at least every two hours of lecture.
- Include this practice in all instructor agreements.



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## Instructor Vetting, Selection & Preparation



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## Hot Tip #19

### To make presenters successful, we must consider ourselves partners in the process!

- Help coach/guide them along the way.
- Make sure they fully understand your audience.
- Assure that they know what to expect the day of the program.
- Whoever is on site (meeting planner, education director, other) be prepared to work with the faculty on making sure content is right on.



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### Hot Tip #20



Discuss course design at the onset of a relationship with new instructors.

- What do they envision?
- What works best for your association?
  - ✓ Case studies or simulations?
  - ✓ Didactic (yes, sometimes this does work best and is preferred!)



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### Hot Tip #21



Get out of the trap that every speaker needs to directly relate to your industry.

- The key is teasing out the common themes *between* industries (innovation, economic woes, etc.)
- Reactor panels can be great for tying this together.



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### Hot Tip #21A



Examples of those include:

- Local businessmen
- Public officials
- Heads of local non-profits
- Physicians
- Attorneys (familiar with your industry)
- Local innovators and entrepreneurs
- Instructors from local colleges/universities



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### Hot Tip #22

#### Find speakers through less than typical means:



- Who do your members know?
- Monitor local organizations, alumni clubs, institutes, universities, etc.
- Check out local talk shows (producers know the big names that are coming to town).
- Who's speaking on a new book tour?
- Look at local bookstores, campuses, or call publishers



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### Hot Tip #23

#### Find well-known speakers to get into subjects *completely off topic*.



In other words, ask them to talk about something they rarely talk about. Your members will be surprised and delighted. (ala James Carville)



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### Hot Tip #24

#### Create an "In the Boardroom" session.



- A small group of members (invite-only or limited attendance) have breakfast with an industry giant. That person is the instructor, and an intimate breakfast session is held in his/her boardroom.
- Candid, confidential conversation.



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### Hot Tip #25



Have predetermined instructor criteria in place for all programs for all **ONGOING** instructors.

- Evaluation expectations
- Attendance policies/cancellations
- Willingness to mentor a new instructor
- Willingness to update materials annually



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### Hot Tip #25A



Consider re-negotiating instructor agreements in this climate

Is your association better off negotiating a base fee + incentive pay for instructors rather than straight honorarium?  
Understand the leverage you have (or do not have) over your instructors first!



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### Instructional Methodology



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# So... Are You Experienced?

Adults have to be able to transfer what we know that we know to the senses and situations that we find ourselves in.

The goal - create life-changing experiences and transformational education through experiential methods!

Can you say: **NO MORE TALKING HEADS!**

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## Hot Tip #26



**Make events experiential whenever possible.**

- Interactive, Hands-on, Stimulating
- “Active Learning” is learning by doing and/or by direct observation, not simply listening to someone else’s description
- On-location is Memorable, Unique, Relevant



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## Hot Tip #27

**ALWAYS be thinking about best practices and benchmarks and TAKE HOME VALUE!**

- Members want to know: “Who is doing this best?” and “How am I doing compared to X?”
- Make these concepts the foundation of what you offer and you will have satisfied members.

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**Marketing**



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**Marketing IS everyone's job!**



Use the right language to market your education.



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**Hot Tip #28**

**Tout BENEFITS, not features.**

- A feature is a “fact” in terms of form or function. A benefit describes a “favorable or desired experience” derived from your education offering.
- Answer this: “What’s in it for me?”
- Benefits use EMOTIONS.



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### Hot Tip #29



#### Use testimonials.

- Get others to prove that your organization is a credible and reliable source for learning and education.
- Get beyond the usual suspects and quote a first-time attendee, or even someone who was a "disbeliever" at first.



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### Program Delivery



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### Hot Tip #30

#### Programs must provide **PRACTICAL INFORMATION** and take-home **VALUE**

- Incorporate case studies and other items based on real-world, practical examples (no more theoretical)
- Members need to quantify value: Have you helped them do their job better? How much? In what ways?



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## Hot Tip #30A

A few sources for how to write case studies:

[www.klariti.com](http://www.klariti.com)

[www.btoonline.com](http://www.btoonline.com)

[www.ecch.com](http://www.ecch.com)

Ideas for take-home value:

- Ask audience, "What are three things you learned today that you can implement tomorrow?"
- Have an actual Review Quiz



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## Great Materials and Links

- American Society of Training and Development [www.ASTD.org](http://www.ASTD.org)
- LERN – Learning Resources Network [www.LERN.org](http://www.LERN.org)
- Council for Adult and Experiential Learning [www.CAEL.org](http://www.CAEL.org)
- American Association for Adult and Continuing Education [www.AAACE.org](http://www.AAACE.org)
- Local SAEs
- The Bob Pike Group [www.bobpikegroup.com](http://www.bobpikegroup.com)



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## Things all Education Professionals should read and pay attention to:

- Harvard Executive Education [www.exed.hbs.edu](http://www.exed.hbs.edu)
- The World Future Society [www.wfs.org](http://www.wfs.org)
- TED (Inspired talks by the world's greatest thinkers and doers) [www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)
- Fast Company [www.fastcompany.com](http://www.fastcompany.com)
- Council on Foreign Relations [www.cfr.org](http://www.cfr.org)



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We are also on FACEBOOK!



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