



**UIA**  
ASSOCIATIONS  
ROUND TABLE

## UIA Associations Round Table - Europe

Tuesday 12 November 2013  
Pullman Hotel at Brussels Midi

### Report on workshop: Membership

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Facilitator: **American Society of Association Executives**

**Susan Robertson**, Executive Vice President

Attendance: morning = about 65; afternoon = about 45

Points she stressed:

- Walk in the shoes of your members: what excites them, what do they want? Gain their trust. Many come because they have a problem and hope you will solve it for them. If you identify something that does not work, be brave and stop doing it, do not just carry on with everything that was ever started. For example, ASAE provided webinars and charged a fee: potential clients used instead other webinars which were free although ASAE considered them to be of lesser quality.
- A great start: Make a real effort to welcome newcomers: use a personal touch, link each with a guide/friend; afterwards thank them for coming with a personal note.
- Retain your members: it costs five to six times as much to recruit a new member as to keep an existing one.
- Draw in volunteers: ask them, individually, to help, assign appropriate tasks, be sure to thank them (ASAE sends handwritten notes).
- Have your performance analysed by an outside body, such as a university research department: an important but difficult exercise.

The speaker had a series of PPT slides which prompted her presentation, otherwise she spoke without notes, a fluent and lively talk highly relevant to associations. She asked for raised hands occasionally to gauge interest. There were two sessions where participants gathered in groups of eight to ten for discussion: the time was intended to be 10-15 minutes but the second session was short and in the afternoon almost vanished entirely. The speaker asked participants to volunteer the most striking points, as a report from each group was likely to be repetitive.

The groups were asked to say what they were most proud of, and possibly what they had done which had failed. Developing best practice, keeping activities up to date were sources of pride; providing discussion forums or developing tools which members did not use were a disappointment. One association had amassed a vast database of information but was wondering how to make use of it. One provided certification services free of charge which were not used: it now charged for the service and had a waiting list of candidates. In the afternoon participants did not focus on the question posed and raised different points. One wanted to know if linking with other bodies to provide services outside its core activity would bring in new members (FAIB replied that its arrangements for airfare discounts were arousing interest). Sources of income, comparing membership fees with non-fee income from other activities, were discussed: ASAE found membership fees were about 15% of income now compared with 25% a few years ago; one association charged no fees for membership; one charged fees proportionate to the member's country's GDP in relation to the GDP of Norway.

The speaker wound up by reviewing membership of an association as distinct from engagement with it, that is, using services or attending conferences without signing up as a member.

Report by Judy Wickens

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