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President's message: Memberships to associations add value

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With the situation with the economy over the last few years all of us have had to tighten our belts on spending. There is however one place where I believe the value add outweighs the cost and that is when it comes to memberships to associations such as BOMA, REFA, IFMA, etc. Many individuals believe that memberships to associations have very little value and when cost cutting measures are asked for this may be the first place they look. In reality having relationships with others in your field of business is actually an asset regardless of the market and economic situation.

While the values outlined on all association sites outline things such as networking, education, training and advocacy I truly believe that the networking part of this is the greatest value. During these last few years I have reached out to many of my peers in BOMA to get their insight into how their firm is cutting costs while still providing valued service to clients. While some services have been reduced to all our sites I have been able to get valued information from members on what reductions have worked at their sites and what really cannot be cut. We have also been able to join forces in some cases to share services and/or change service dates in order to reduce costs (due to less travel time costs to vendors) in order to continue providing the same service at a reduced rate. Our biggest challenge is to continue to provide quality service to our clients and ensure their health, safety and security while still being budget conscious.

The networking aspect is also essential should you find yourself without a job due to budgetary cuts. While we all do our best to minimize the need to reduce staff (realizing this in the end will affect service to our customers) it sometimes is inevitable. By having a strong networking connections in place there have been many instances where our members have been able to find new positions either with other management firms and/or with a supplier that is a member. The networking aspect also exposes us to a variety of different fields (thanks to our supplier members) and many times we realize that our experiences and expertise suit a different line of work which we would have never been exposed to and/or been able to explore should we not have these networking connections.

The social aspect of networking is also a great asset since it allows us to have a group of people that can understand the day to day issues which we experience and provide support and insight into how to handle these issues. Allowing yourself to have a network of associates that support you and can understand what may occur in your line of work on a daily basis really can put things in perspective when we are having a tough time. Bouncing ideas and issues off someone that has had similar experiences is a great way to keep thing under control and realize someone is on your side.

Therefore before cutting the budget of expenses for Association memberships think of the assets from training, education, advocacy but especially the networking aspect for both professional and personal well being at all times. Having the ability to reach out association members and having a support system is truly an asset during any economic or market situations.

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