

Asia-Pacific Newsletter - November 2012

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This issue of the ASAE newsletter for associations in the Asia-Pacific region features:

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These stories just scratch the surface of the work that association leaders are doing globally. To learn more about ASAE and the resources it provides for association leaders around the world, please visit www.asaecenter.org/international/welcome.

How the World Toilet Organization Leverages Social Media



Have you ever heard of the WTO?

That's the World Toilet Organization, which I bet is not the organization that first came to mind!

Jack Sim founded the organization in 2001, making it his mission to improve sanitation conditions for people globally. With such a catchy name, PR has never been an issue for WTO, yet social media has allowed him to expand his reach even further.

Social media in general has a large impact because it allows users to reach out to people in ways that traditional media cannot. It brings people with shared interests together, giving new ideas wide coverage. In Sim's case, he never realized so many people were reading his blog until he joined Facebook.

In the past, when citizens had a social or political grievance, official outlets may have been inaccessible, indifferent, incapable of addressing, or in opposition to your concerns. Informal outlets may have provided personal relief, but rarely could they respond with adequate compensation. Many suffered in disconnected silence.

With the advent of social media, personal problems can be shared immediately with a broad base and become indicative of society-wide issues. It has opened up many countries (or forced them to) and changed the way governments around the world are behaving.

In Singapore, for example, not so long ago people would be sued for slander and defamation if they made certain public comments against the government. Today there may be tens of thousands of people talking online, sharing similar sentiments. The government simply cannot sue everyone, so they have to listen instead.

Sim tells a story that sheds light on how much has changed. "Last night I had a chance to speak to Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore. Recently there has been much discussion on my Facebook page concerning posts I've made on government reactions to sensitive issues that I have raised. I decided to write to the Deputy PM to clarify his stance and was pleasantly surprised when he agreed to meet. In which country does a Deputy PM spend 90 minutes to talk to someone that complains about the government on social media?"

Though Facebook is Jack's preferred social media tool, he says he wants to tweet more often. "I always thought that I should tweet only when I have something important to say," he says. "However, recently people have told me that I should use it to say whatever is on my mind."

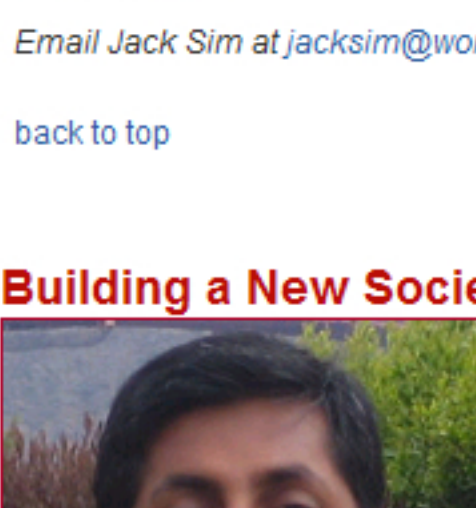
Sim says people need new channels of dialogue with the government. That means if a citizen asks a question or proposes something, then we also need a response. Someone has to tell us the "why." Only then, Sim says, can people come to an agreement.

—Bojan Tercon

Email Jack Sim at jacksim@worldtoilet.org

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Building a New Society in India



The Transportation Research Group of India is a new society that provides a unique forum for the country's transportation researchers, educators, managers, and policymakers. It intends to cover all modes and sectors of transport, for both passenger and freight movement.

I recently spoke with TRG President Dr. Ashish Verma on what it was like to start up a new society.

How did TRG come together?

A group of colleagues came up with the idea to create TRG in 2008. However, it took until the end of 2011 to really convert this idea into the society that exists today. In the interim period, the society went through a lot of ups and downs.

The onus of setting up the society was initially given to certain people within the founding group. In hindsight, that decision was a mistake, as none of them had any experience on how to form a society. It was only when I changed jobs, moved to Bangalore, met with association management company CIM Global, and took responsibility that things truly started to move.

What were some early challenges?

Coming up with the idea for the society was not a problem, since the founding members were all researchers and academics in the transportation field. The issue was more how to transform this idea into something workable. The founders soon realized that in order to execute their ideas, they needed structural support from people with the right expertise.

If you had to do this again, what would you do differently?

The key is to keep the governance of the society separate from the administration and management. The same set of people cannot do both because those who are in the governing/executive body are basically volunteers who decide on the society's technical aspects. They cannot, however, adequately perform the admin/management functions in addition to their actual jobs, nor do they possess the specific skill set to do so.

This division of labor becomes critical in the nascent phase, when the society is growing, because unless you have staff that is dedicated and well-versed in the policies and procedures, it becomes very difficult to build momentum.

How does a new organization appeal to potential members?

The membership drive is always a big challenge, especially when starting up. Potential members still need to see your activities and capabilities before they decide to join.

After registering the society on May 28, 2011, we immediately embarked on organizing our first conference in Bangalore in December of that year. It was a tremendous challenge, since we took on arranging the conference not long after beginning the daily business of our new society.

We gave a lot of incentives to the registrants, including the chance to become a society member in the registration fee. This is what really kick-started the membership drive.

How did the first conference come together?

Given that we were a new society, we needed support from an international body with a similar mission. We approached the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies in the United States, the largest and most renowned organization in the world on transportation. Fortunately, a lot of our Indian colleagues are in high-level positions in the transportation research profession in the United States. Their excitement about transportation development in India meant they offered substantial aid our efforts to secure outside collaboration. We also got the support of the American Society of Civil Engineers. These two endorsements put the conference on strong footing and gave us access to the two society's members, who in turn helped us publicize the event among our non-members.

Their support also enabled us to obtain renowned plenary speakers. We ended up having 300 delegates attend our first conference, with participants coming from 15 countries. Our outreach strategy really helped get us the support we needed.

—Bojan Tercon

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Membership in India: What Works?

Membership in India: What Works?

India is a particularly complex region for associations, according to Tamir Kaur, CAE, director, association management and consulting, Middle East, North Africa, and India, for MCI Group. Though associations are familiar to Indians, a U.S.-style approach to membership isn't.

"India does have a lot of associations that are local and homebred, but the concept that a lot of Indian associations have is one of lifetime membership," she says—that is, members pay a one-time fee instead of renewing annually. Kaur adds that many Indian professionals are just beginning to accept non-native products—the country opened itself to imports only 21 years ago—and that Indian companies have only recently seen the value in covering training costs for employees.

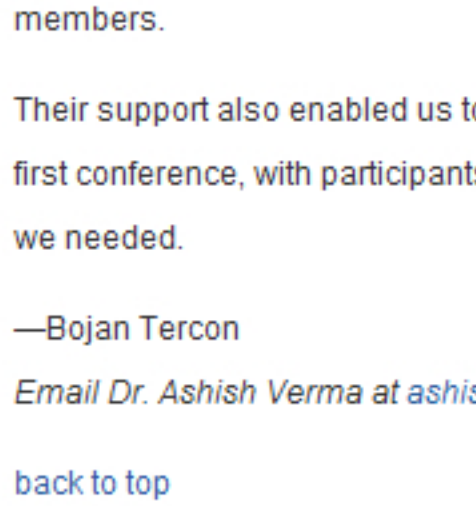
Kaur says that associations looking to build a presence in India need to ask themselves, "Do you want a smaller number of members in the first year, or do you want to gain critical mass? If you want to gain critical mass, you've got to make yourself relevant, not just to the small percentage of consumers who will pay a higher cost but to the large section of middle-class, very value-conscious customers."

—Mark Athitakis

This article is adapted from "The Right Price for Going Global," which originally ran in the August 2012 issue of Associations Now, published by ASAE. Visit www.associationsnow.com for more information.

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Launching the ASAE Certificate for Association Management in China



The Chinese Association for Science and Technology (CAST) is the first Chinese association to have started the certification process to obtain the ASAE Certificate for Association Management.

The plan to launch the certificate program in China began with market research ASAE conducted in 2011, implementing recommendations with its global partner, MCI. The program is currently in the implementation phase, but well before implementation MCI was developing strong government relationships to get buy-in. When it comes to association management in China, government

authorization does not come easily, so it is critical to build initial relationships with government-related agencies or departments.

The first half-day course was conducted in July of this year. The certificate program has five courses: Membership Management, Volunteer Management, Association Communication and Marketing, Essential Practice of Association Management, and Leadership. CAST, having signed up for all five courses, chose to start with the Membership and Leadership modules.

The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, as attendees are eager to learn about association management, a novel concept in China. Most Chinese associations do not have a varied portfolio of products and services; they may offer trade shows, publications and/or conferences, but not much more. Because most Chinese associations do not have product profiles as well-rounded as those of their American counterparts, they are interested in developing valuable membership products and services to retain their members.

The biggest challenge to implementing a certificate program is the lengthy process of getting the ball rolling. The Chinese government strictly follows policy guidelines set forth in each five-year national plan. Thus the work of the various departments, including government associations, is entirely aligned with these policies. Even if the staff thinks the certificate would be valuable, they face the difficult prospect of winning approval from their leaders.

Some government agencies may block attempts, believing that Western association programs have little cultural or procedural relevance to Chinese associations. Moreover, they may perceive that Chinese association leaders already have enough exposure to Western ideas through their boards of directors, who are often industry leaders with many connections to Western companies.

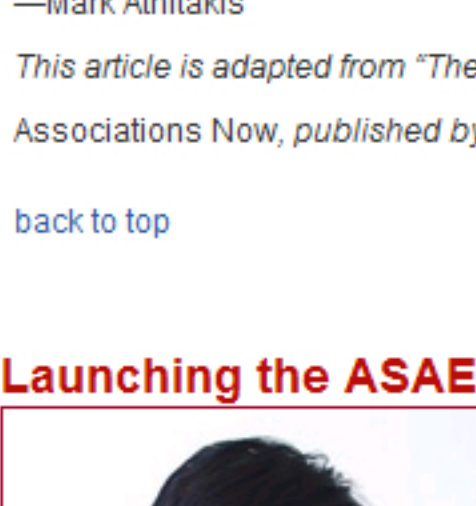
Another issue: The prevailing perception in China is that associations should focus on social development instead of generating revenue. This lack of market drive is another obstacle to selling the program to government-controlled associations. That is why ASAE and MCI are also focusing on associations not under direct control by the Chinese government. These associations have more freedom to develop new products and to do business in a more flexible manner, and can adopt the Certificate Program with greater ease.

—Bojan Tercon

For more information on the ASAE Certificate for Association Management program in China, please contact Maria Tong, Senior Account Director MCI Beijing at Maria.Tong@mci-group.com

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Global Perspective Session at the ASAE Annual Meeting



On August 11-14, 2012, ASAE held its Annual Meeting and Exposition in Dallas.

As has become customary, the program included a comprehensive international track, as well as more international participants.

At a Global Perspectives Session, a panel of four international associations had a chance to introduce themselves and share their experiences: Association Forum from Australia, the Hong Kong Association of Pharmaceutical Industry, the Philippine Retail Association and the Korea MICE Association.

Jae-kil Choi, secretary general of the Korea MICE Association, was attending his first ASAE Annual Meeting, and was excited to share his knowledge of the Korean market with ASAE colleagues who were looking to expand internationally.

A little-known fact about Korea is that it has a long tradition in associations, today boasting around 100,000 of them. These associations are starting to adopt new educational programs for their members, an area of huge potential for exchange of information and collaboration with other international associations.

Though Korean associations are typically insular in respect to their operations, they have begun to collaborate more with their regional and international counterparts. The Korea MICE Association is currently partnering with the Japanese Association of Professional Convention Organization and Meeting Professionals International, having recently finalized a memorandum of understanding with JAPCO for an educational exchange program. They also act as the Korean Chapter for MPI, thus conducting the Global Certificate in Meetings and Business Events education program for the Certified Meeting Planner exam.

"One of the biggest challenges is to establish the concept of fair competition in Korea," Choi says. Currently, he says, there are too many professional convention and exhibition organizers (PCOs and PEOs). Some 700 companies now compete in the Korean national market, making for intense competition. This situation has encouraged the Korea MICE Association to work toward establishing the principle of fair competition in its domestic market.

Another challenge is the polarization of PCOs and PEOs between the metropolitan and local areas. Most events in Korea are contracted by large conglomerates in metropolitan areas. About 75 percent of the events are located around Seoul. The Korea MICE Association is trying to encourage metropolitan and local PCOs alike to enter the bidding.

There is strong pressure on convention centers to increase profitability. Korea has 12 regional convention centers that provide a lot of indirect benefits to the local communities. Nevertheless, there is a strong push to have them report strong surpluses, which is not easy in the current market.

The ASAE Annual Meeting provides international associations such as the Korea MICE Association opportunities to share their experiences and to learn on an international level. Choi found the experience very beneficial, but expressed one frustration: the stifling Texas summer. "Very hot and very unforgettable," he says.

Notwithstanding the weather, Mr. Choi was thrilled that he achieved the facilitator qualification status in the Certified Program in Management while in Dallas. He also saw a distinct benefit in the multitude of educational programs offered. He would have liked to have seen more international participants. More Korean prospects would attend, he believes, if a better matching program between international sellers and buyers were available.

Next year's ASAE Annual Meeting will be held in Atlanta from August 3-16, 2013.

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—Bojan Tercon

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