

SmithBucklin Releases Study on How Associations Are Leveraging Outsourcing

CHICAGO – September 9, 2015 – A survey of senior U.S. association executives found that 81 percent of associations are outsourcing functions other than audit and legal services (which are by their nature commonly outsourced by associations). [SmithBucklin](#), the association management and services company more organizations turn to than any other, today released the survey results as a resource for association executives considering outsourcing as an option to help achieve their organizations' goals.

Graphic design/multimedia/video were the most outsourced service functions, and editorial/publishing and advertising sales were tied for second place. Those were followed by membership technology, tradeshow management, exhibit/sponsorship sales and advocacy/government relations. Furthermore, the survey showed that 46 percent of respondents said they are considering outsourcing at least one function besides legal and audit services.

[SmithBucklin Outsourced Services](#) commissioned the survey to determine association executives' decisions and attitudes toward using services companies or non-employees. Independent market research company Ipsos conducted the survey of 360 U.S. association and professional society executives (manager to C-Suite).

"We were surprised by the fact that so many associations are already using expertise outside of their organization," said Leslie Thornton, Vice President, SmithBucklin Outsourced Services.

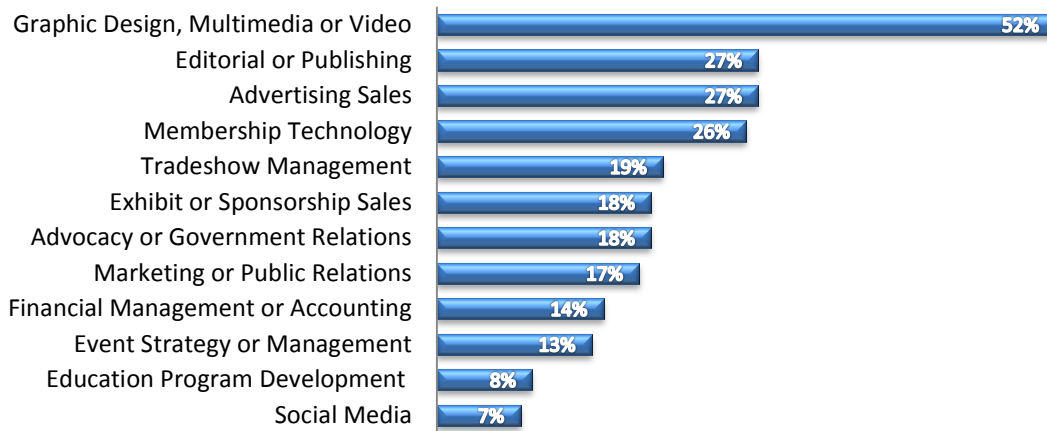
"The study shows how association executives are augmenting their in-house teams," said Carol McGury, Executive Vice President, Event and Education Services, SmithBucklin. "Association executives realize they cannot hire and employ every talent they need to deliver against the important work of their organization. By outsourcing solutions for specific needs, they can ensure that their organizations thrive while serving the best interests of their members."

In addition to revealing what services associations are currently outsourcing and the services they are considering outsourcing, the study also showed how the organizations use or plan to use outsourcing to achieve their goals, and what benefits they expect to gain by outsourcing in the next two years.

What Associations Are Outsourcing

Fifty-two percent of respondents said they outsourced graphic design/multimedia/video. Other top outsourced services in order of ranking included: editorial/publishing (27 percent), advertising sales (27 percent), membership technology (26 percent), tradeshow management (19 percent), exhibit/sponsorship sales (18 percent), advocacy/government relations (18 percent) and marketing/public relations (17 percent). Social media was last (7 percent).

Other than Legal and Audit, What Services Are You Currently Outsourcing?



Outsourced Services Associations Are Considering

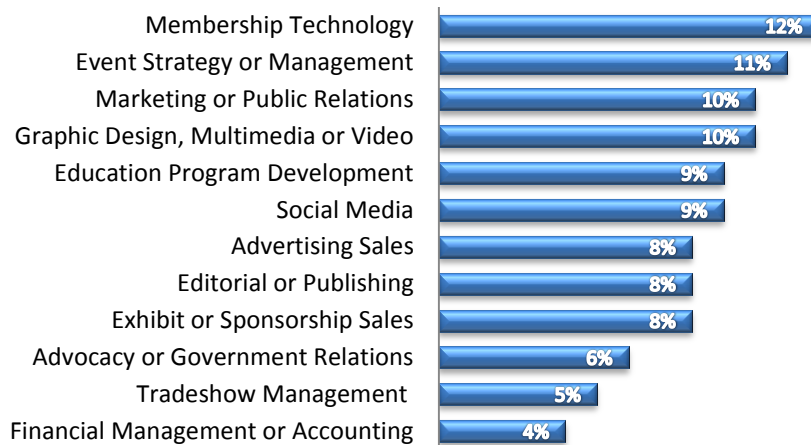
When asked what services they were considering outsourcing in the future, 12 percent of respondents listed membership technology, followed closely by event strategy/management (11 percent). Marketing/public relations and graphic design/multimedia/video tied at 10 percent, and education program development and social media tied at 9 percent.

“In key areas, we outsource where it is difficult to have in-house expertise,” one respondent said. “In areas where the business is changing rapidly, like technology support, it makes more sense to outsource.”

“Seeing technology first on the list won’t surprise many people,” Thornton said. “Today, many associations’ technology needs are more sophisticated. In the era of big data and member analytics, associations naturally will tap outside sources with proven expertise in collecting, organizing and protecting membership data.”

“It’s a similar case for event strategy and management. Association managers are recognizing the need to bring new, innovative ideas to their meeting space to help increase attendance, attract sponsors, and drive attendee and member engagement both at the event and year-round,” Thornton said.

What Services Are You Considering Outsourcing?



Why Associations Use Outsourcing

When asked to explain in their own words how they used or planned to use outsourcing to achieve their organizations' goals, most respondents focused on outsourcing specific skills (53 percent), followed by supplementing in-house staff (34 percent) and saving money (27 percent).

Respondents also said they used outsourcing as a solution for temporary staffing challenges (9 percent). Others responded that outsourcing helped fulfill functions outside of the organization's core purpose (6 percent), or meet goals and objectives (4 percent).

Below are several examples of respondents' comments:

"Outsourcing enables us to have a high level of expertise in an area at a much lower cost than if we had that employee on staff full time."

"Outsourcing allows us to utilize professional services on an 'as-needed basis,' and the group we use can be fully focused on the task."

"We outsource when staff resources are at capacity. Usually we have a mix of internal and outsourced activities going on."

How Does Your Organization Use or Plan to Use Outsourcing?



Outsourcing over the Next Two Years

When association executives who are currently or considering outsourcing were asked what benefits they expected to achieve with outsourcing over the next two years, 70 percent cited accessing specialized talent. Other answers included: increasing organizational capacity (58 percent), increasing staffing flexibility (54 percent) and improving organizational performance (53 percent). Almost half foresaw benefits to their bottom line through reducing costs (48 percent), growing revenue (31 percent) and increasing competitive edge (25 percent).

“The association sector recognizes that outsourcing is an effective way for organizations to extend their teams and wisely allocate resources,” said Matt Sanderson, Executive Vice President, SmithBucklin. “In that way, associations mirror the overall business sector, which continues to rely on outsourced services as a time-tested business strategy.” A [2014 KPMG survey](#) found that 72 percent of major enterprises were planning to make increased expenditures in outsourcing services over the next two years.

What Are the Expected Benefits from Outsourcing over Next 2 Years?



In 2014, SmithBucklin launched [Outsourced Services](#) in response to associations looking for specialized talent and skills, increased staffing and organizational capacity, staffing flexibility and new capabilities. SmithBucklin offers a comprehensive array of high-impact, customized and cost-effective solutions in the following areas: event and tradeshow strategy and management; exhibit, sponsorship and advertising sales; financial management and accounting; marketing and public relations; editorial and publishing; graphic design, multimedia and video; social media; technology solutions; education program development and management; government relations and advocacy; promotional products and apparel; expert consulting and leading practices; and worldwide capabilities.

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About the Survey

Ipsos, the world's third-largest opinion and market research company, conducted the survey of 360 association and professional society executives. In order to qualify for the survey, respondents had to be high-level employees (manager to C-Suite) in the U.S. All interviews were conducted between April 21 and May 18 through online data collection.

About SmithBucklin

SmithBucklin is the [association management](#) and services company more organizations turn to than any other. Our mission is to achieve the missions of the client organizations we serve and provide uncompromised stewardship for their long-term prosperity. SmithBucklin offers full-service management and [outsourced services](#) to trade associations, professional societies, technology user communities, industry consortia, charitable organizations, corporations and government institutes. Founded in 1949, SmithBucklin has offices in Chicago, Washington D.C., Old Lyme, Conn., St. Louis, Bethesda, Md., and San Ramon, Calif., and delivers seamless association and event management services worldwide. The company is 100 percent employee-owned. For more information, please visit www.smithbucklin.com or call 1-800-539-9740.

More information about the Outsourced Services Survey is available on SmithBucklin's website at www.smithbucklin.com/outsourcedservicesinfographic.