

# 5 Habits of Growth-Oriented Associations

What's the difference between surviving and thriving?

We've identified the five defining characteristics of future-focused associations. Adopting these traits allows your organization to chart a course for long-term growth and success.



# Surviving vs. Thriving: Which Type of Association Are You?

We work with associations of all types, across dozens of different industries every day. Because our exclusive focus is association management software (AMS), we get a unique “behind the curtains” peek deep into the operational machinations of these organizations.

And when we work with an association partner, we don't just interact with executives and IT teams — We work with everyone, from the membership and events teams to community volunteers. In other words, we get to know the organization — its staff, goals, and mission — from top to bottom.

What has become very clear to us is that associations, irrespective of their size or industry, can be classified into two very different categories.

## Survival Mode

The first category is occupied by associations struggling to get by — and for valid reasons. The COVID-19 pandemic shut down business travel and created adverse consequences in the economy that did not spare associations, and event revenue tanked as a result. In addition, member renewal rates are down, partly because older members are aging out, and young professionals aren't necessarily as eager to join an association as the generations that preceded them.

And like all types of businesses and organizations, associations are faced with staffing shortages and morale challenges, as they try to remain relevant in the so-called attention economy where members are overloaded with information from a cascading number of sources.

## Thriving in Spite of It All

But, then, there is the second category: Those associations with a “growth mindset.” Yes, they face the same challenges as their struggling counterparts, but their approach is distinctly different.

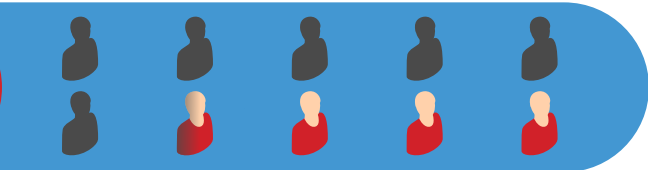
We polled our staff and spoke with some of these associations themselves, and we've arrived at five defining characteristics — or “success habits,” if you will — that growth-minded associations share.

## The Formula for Success

As we outline each habit, we'll also share how these resilient and agile organizations are using their AMS as an enablement tool to support their mission and ensure its longevity for the benefit of their current and future members. Because growth-oriented associations are preparing today for a bright future, and technology is one of the tools they use to get there.



62% of associations report decreasing or stagnant membership.\*



\*Marketing General, 2022 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report



## HABIT 1:

**Growth-oriented associations obsess about providing a seamless, user-friendly experience to their members**

**Tech companies from Amazon to Uber have revolutionized our expectations as consumers — and there's no turning back!**

A personalized, hassle-free experience is now a non-negotiable expectation. We expect our products and services to be delivered conveniently, fast, on our terms, and through a seamless, tech-enabled interface.

Your members don't check these expectations at the door when they interact with your organization. Instead, they expect the same type of smooth, individualized experience. Growth-minded associations see this as an opportunity to up their game and, in the process, grow member loyalty.

Growth-oriented associations don't view technology as an obstacle but as an enabler — and they are obsessed with providing improved levels of convenience, accessibility, and user experience at each member touch point, from accessing events to registering for certification programs.

Future-focused associations are raising their game to adapt to the ever-evolving demands of members who want nothing less than the best. They understand that if they are not keeping up, they're getting left behind.

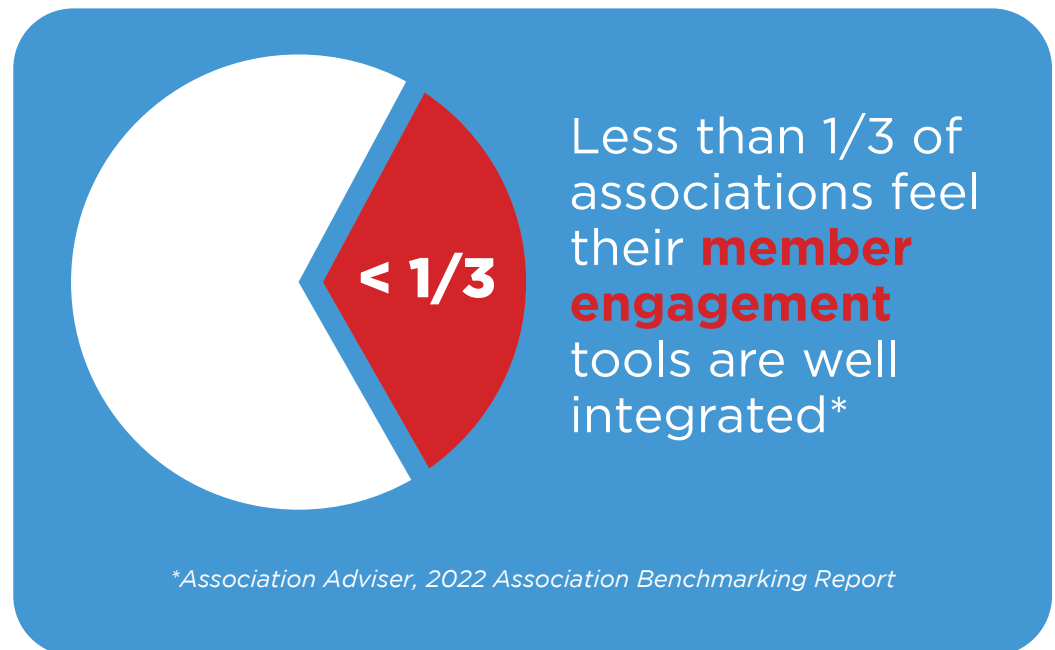


## How a modern AMS can improve member experience

A modern AMS provides a sleek, mobile-friendly interface for members, who should be able to register for your annual conference as easily as they purchase movie tickets. Members can access industry events, educational resources, and certification programs through a seamless, user-friendly portal.

Further, using smart technology and AI, an AMS should allow you to tailor your offerings to the specific needs and interests of your members, much like Amazon's personalized product recommendations based on past purchases and site searches.

A modern AMS enables an engaging and rewarding experience for your members, ultimately leading to increased retention, growth, and revenue.





## HABIT 2:

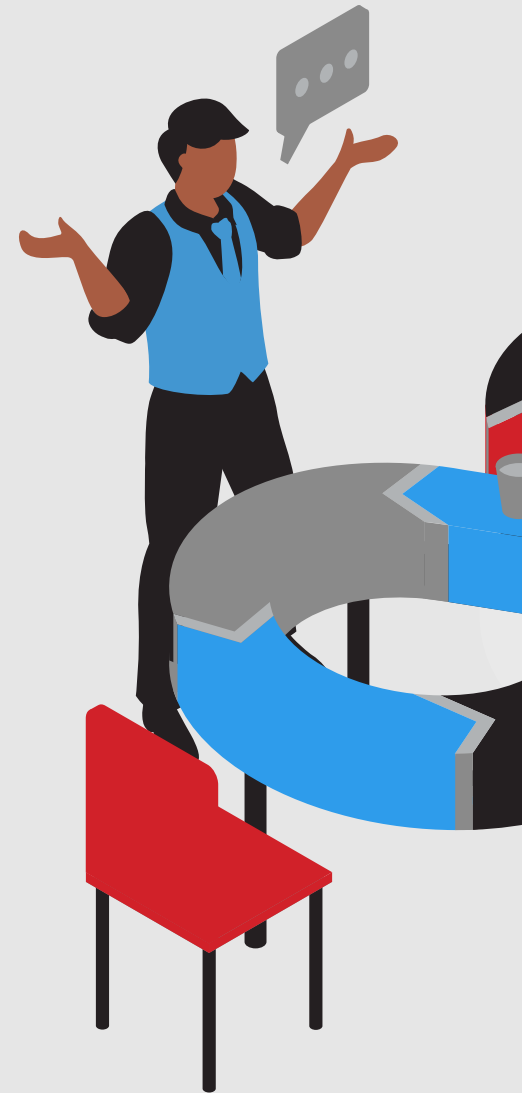
**Growth-oriented associations have an engaged and member-centric staff**

**The COVID-19 pandemic engendered an onslaught of workforce challenges that continue to plague employers of all types and in all industries, including professional and trade associations.**

And while no association is immune to these staffing problems, we notice a very different vibe at some of the associations we work with.

Growth-oriented associations have a more energized staff and palpably higher morale. Whether we're interfacing with IT staff, the financial department, or the membership team, we notice that their employees mention their mission more frequently. And, while every association is mission-driven, growth-minded associations spend most of their time supporting their members rather than being bogged down in administrative headaches.

Inspired by their mission, growth-oriented associations are more innovative and member-centric, consistently pushing the envelope to create new and better ways to serve their members. Their dedication to their mission and members is the reason behind their success, and this is apparent in their higher morale and energized staff.





## How a modern AMS can encourage staff to focus on members

The ultimate goal of any association is to provide great value to its members. However, staff can get bogged down with technology and administrative headaches, often undermining their ability to focus on creating value. This is where a modern AMS can help.

A modern AMS with an intuitive interface and always-on training modules fosters fast, organization-wide adoption, encouraging cross-divisional collaboration and resulting in deeper insights into overall organizational performance.

And by eliminating routine tasks via workflow automation, your staff will be more energized and focused on doing great things for their members. Why? Because automating repetitive and, let's face it — dull tasks not only saves time, it allows staff to focus on mission-critical objectives that they know will make a difference. In short, a modern AMS is a catalyst for operational excellence.

> 50%

More than 1/2 of associations report **being understaffed**, especially teams engaged with **member-facing activities**.\*

*\*Association Adviser, 2022 Association Benchmarking Report*



## HABIT 3:

**Growth-oriented associations pursue non-dues revenue opportunities aggressively but selectively**

### **For many associations, dues revenue is stagnant or even declining.**

And while in-person events may be slowly returning, event revenue remains well below pre-pandemic levels for most organizations. Consequently, the need for additional and more diverse revenue streams remains a top priority for nearly every member-driven organization.

Association leaders understand that the traditional association business model must evolve. New non-dues revenue streams are essential for survival. This is true for growth-oriented associations as well, of course. However, in our experience, what differentiates growth-oriented associations is how they approach new revenue initiatives.

Future-focused associations have a culture that supports experimentation and innovation. Staff have the bandwidth to think outside the box and pursue new opportunities aggressively, but they also tend to be more strategic and methodical in their approach.

While it's important to be open to new ideas, it's equally important to avoid impulsive decision-making. Growth-oriented associations rely heavily on data-driven decision-making to create a clear plan of action when determining which initiatives will support sustainable growth and add value to members and sponsors alike.







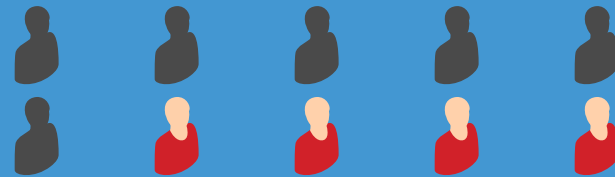
## How a modern AMS can support non-dues revenue opportunities

A modern AMS can free staff from dull, routine tasks using generative AI and workflow automation. Not only will this increase your staff's bandwidth to pursue new opportunities, but it will improve morale, contributing to an invigorating work environment and energetic culture of innovation.

Further, a modern AMS should also have role-based dashboards distilling data into clearly understandable visuals, thus encouraging broad adoption across departments. The result: clear, trustworthy, and actionable data that helps staff identify trends and home in on member needs.

When combined with a team equipped and primed to act on new opportunities, deeper, more meaningful analytics will fuel an organization's attempt to diversify and expand its revenue portfolio.

Generating **non-dues revenue** is the #1 priority for associations\*



60% of associations report **stagnant or declining revenue**\*\*

\* McKinley Advisors, 2022 Association Viewpoint Study

\*\*Forvis, 2023 State of the Nonprofit Sector



## HABIT 4:

# Growth-oriented associations are resilient and agile

### We are living in an era characterized by disruption.

The world is undergoing rapid changes in various fields, including technology, politics, economics, and social norms. The speed and scale of these disruptions are unprecedented and pervasive.

One of the most significant disruptions is the ongoing technological revolution, particularly in the fields of artificial intelligence, robotics, and automation. These technologies are transforming the way we work, communicate, and even think. They are changing the nature of jobs and industries, creating new opportunities while also rendering many traditional jobs obsolete.

In our experience, all associations are striving to keep up with the disruptions impacting their industries so they can continue to serve their members' needs. For growth-oriented associations, rapid change is challenging yet also transformative. They understand that holding onto the status quo is a losing battle.

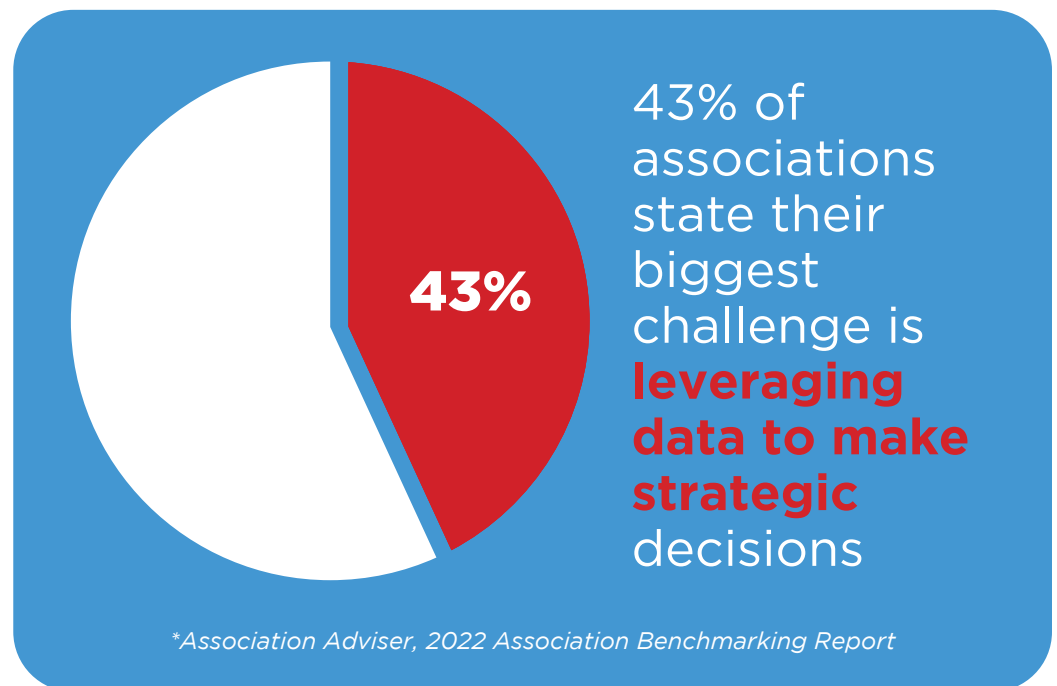
Growth-oriented associations embrace new technologies that have the potential to support and strengthen their mission. They are more likely to be proactive, resilient, and innovative because they understand that change presents new opportunities for growth.



## How a modern AMS can foster organizational agility

Unlike previous generations of software, your AMS does not need to be the end-all, be-all for organizational activity – nor should it be. But it must be flexible, with a wide range of open APIs so associations can “plug & play” other best-in-class software solutions, such as your email platform or learning management software (LMS). A flexible architecture ensures that all systems are integrated and the data talk to each other across platforms.

On top of that, a modern AMS incorporates AI and automation to streamline tasks, leading to higher levels of efficiency. In addition, intuitive functionality fosters greater adoption, breaks down cross-departmental silos, and generates cleaner data so your organization can be more responsive to new opportunities, leading to organizational growth.





## HABIT 5:

# Growth-oriented associations work with partners, not vendors

**When we engage with a growth-oriented association, we notice that they have higher expectations from us – and this is a good thing.**

It signifies an organization that holds itself and its suppliers to higher standards.

Growth-oriented organizations recognize the importance of building strong partnerships instead of simply viewing their suppliers as vendors. These organizations understand that suppliers can offer much more than just products or services. They leverage these relationships to gain valuable insights, expertise, and support to help them achieve their objectives and support their organizational mission.

Partnership-based relationships are characterized by mutual respect, trust, and collaboration. Unlike vendor-based relationships that are typically transactional, partnerships involve a long-term commitment to working together to achieve strategic goals. A strategic partner is invested in your success and works collaboratively to identify opportunities for growth, streamline operations, and improve the overall strength of the organization.





## How a modern AMS vendor can be your partner for growth

In addition to our smarter, simpler member management solution, Impexium prides itself in offering personalized and responsive support. Our greatest priority is the successful implementation and rollout of our clients' AMS. As your partner, we ensure the platform is configured to support your organization's current and future objectives.

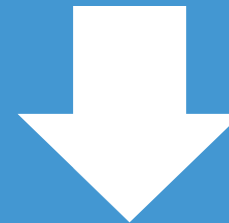
And, for us, implementation is only the first step. Our experience enables us to anticipate hurdles to adoption and usage so you don't have to. We ensure that all users are comfortable using the platform by offering multiple individual and group training options, combined with on-demand videos and tutorials embedded in the platform itself.

We strive for excellence in everything we do because our partners deserve nothing less.

Companies that have a collaborative relationship with their suppliers\*



**GROWTH**



**OPERATING  
COSTS**



**PROFITS**

\* McKinsey & Company, [Supplier Collaboration Index](#)

# Chart Your Course for Long-term Growth

Trade associations, professional societies, and non-profits of all sizes have transformed their businesses and exceeded member expectations with Impexium's membership management software.

**Let us show you what's possible. Schedule a personalized, no-obligation demo.**

**Contact Us**



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