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INSIGHT

QUARTER 2 | 2025

Magazine

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
MISSOURI SOCIETY OF ASSOCIATION

EXECUTIVES



**Building a Strong
Association Culture
Through Strategic
and Thoughtful
Communication**

pg.6

**How Association
Leaders Can Equip
Lean Teams, Stay
Aligned, and Deliver
for Their Members**

pg.10

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Board of Directors

2025 MSAE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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SEE YOU SOON IN *Springfield, Missouri*

Want to make the most of summer with your group? Surround yourself with sunshine, fresh air, and the vibrant culture of the city. Whether you're planning a team outing, client event, or social gathering, the City of the Ozarks offers endless ways to connect and unwind. From open-air patios and live music to art walks and street festivals, it's the perfect setting to soak up the season.

Connect with Lisa Perez to start planning your ultimate summer group outing!



Lisa Perez, Sales Manager
Visit Springfield, Missouri
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**VISIT
SPRING
FIELD MO**

FROM THE PRESIDENT



PRESIDENT
GARY GATES

MSAE Members,

I write this letter on the first day of summer break for my children. I am not sure where the spring has gone, but the pollen-filled days of leaving the house prepared for all four seasons in one day are upon us. Bring on the family vacations where the aloe relieves sunburn, the ice cream is always calorie-free, and lifelong memories are made.

Building on the last message, where I focused on Membership Goals, this quarter, we will examine the Education Strategic Plan and what it means for MSAE members. Perhaps this will provide insight into the “why” behind our events and even assist you in expanding your offerings.

During the Board Retreat last October, we decided to examine the education offerings through a “generational” lens. We wanted to expand offers for new/young association professionals and bring back focused offerings for executive-level professionals. The Education Committee, in my opinion, has placed many great learning opportunities on the calendar.

The Event Summit Committee is building on the momentum from last year’s event and expanding the day with the return of a speakers showcase. When I first engaged with MSAE nearly 20 years ago, the speakers showcase was the most valuable member benefit as it saved me hours of watching carefully curated YouTube videos produced to make potential keynote speakers look far better than real life. This year, we are working to bring this back to the Event Summit on July 10th in addition to relevant educational sessions geared for all levels of association staff.

Perhaps the most exciting change of the year is pivoting from MSAE Scholarships for high school students to a new reimbursement program to assist members in obtaining their CAE and CMP! Watch for more information on this program, how to apply, and the potential creation of study groups for these challenging exams.

Speaking of CAE/CMP, the Education Committee’s final goal is to format educational offerings that qualify them for CEUs for Association certifications. This should assist those who already have their certifications to meet renewal requirements right in their own backyard.

As I mentioned last time, instead of the quick “I’m too busy” response when you see that MSAE email or flyer, try the “Let me make the time for me and my professional growth” approach in 2025 to see how it feels.

With gratitude for the opportunity to serve you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Gates".

MSAE Coffee and Conversations

June 12, 2025 • 8:00 am

Missouri Park & Recreation Association • 2018 William Street, Jefferson City, MO 65109

Topic: Accounting Software

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Building a Strong Association Culture Through Strategic and Thoughtful Communication

Andrea Kerbuski, APR, *Bellwether Public Relations* | Vice President

At the heart of any healthy culture is great communication. We often focus on how to communicate effectively, but we tend to forget that it is just as important to foster strong connections and a sense of community. Clear and consistent communication helps reinforce your organization's values, reiterates your association goals and creates a sense of belonging that builds meaningful relationships among members — all of which are crucial for cultivating a positive, engaged culture in which both staff and members thrive.

If you take advantage of the communication vehicles that are available to today's associations with a spirit of engagement and a commitment to community, you can build a culture in which staff will thrive while members engage and grow. Learn how you can elevate your association's culture through these communication tools and tactics:

Develop a Consistent Voice

Make sure your association has a clear and consistent voice across all communication channels - emails, newsletters, social media, and website. Your voice is your trademark and a frontline representation of the culture you wish to cultivate and maintain.

Leverage Your Mission & Vision

Every message sent should reflect your organization's values, goals, and tone. This helps everyone align with the shared vision and mission and reminds members of what the association

stands for. Develop a style guide that includes voice, tone, and design standards. This way, anyone writing on your team will be able to follow the same set of guidelines to ensure consistency, which will then help to share the culture you desire.

Use Storytelling to Connect

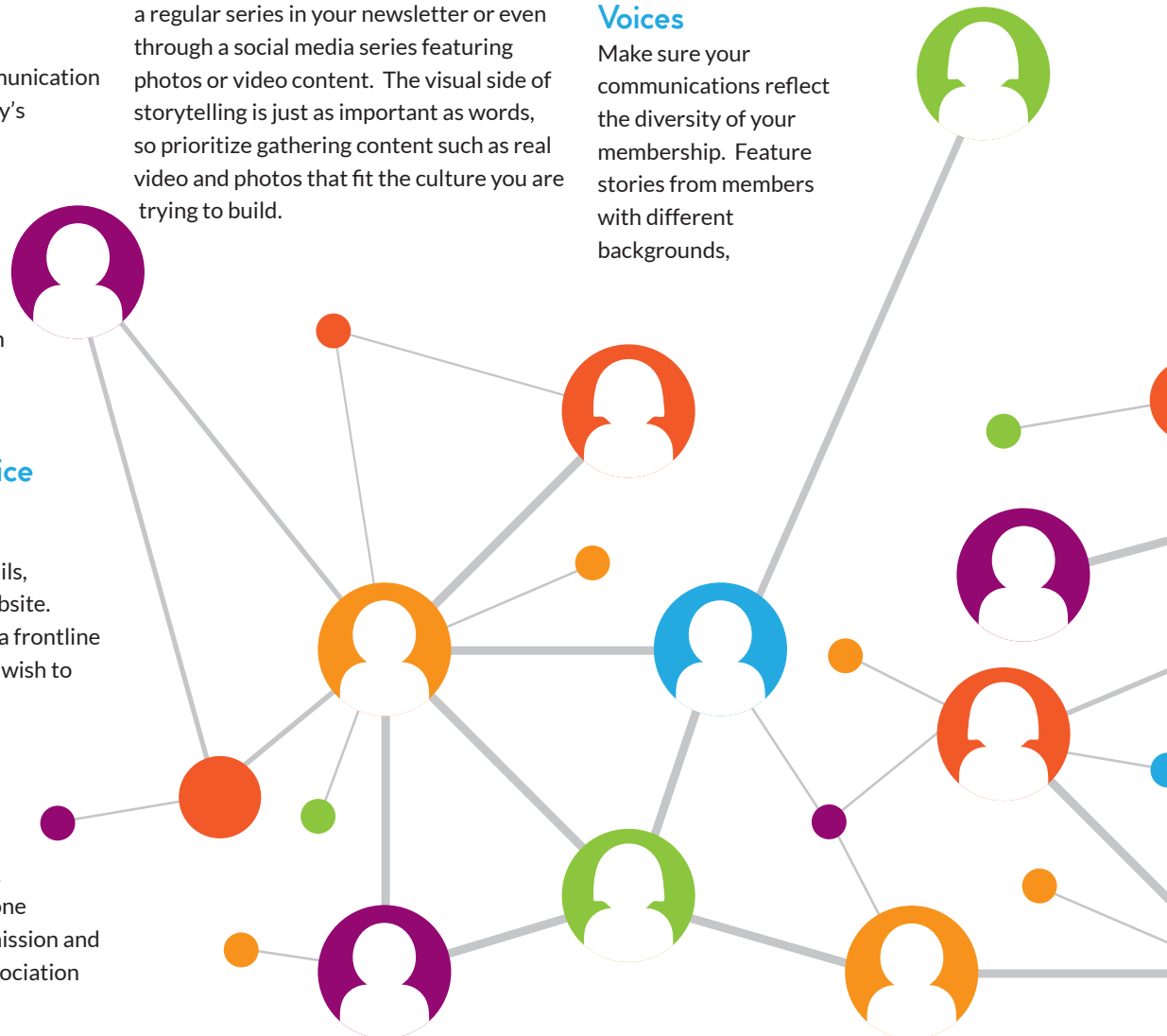
People connect with stories. Share experiences directly from your team and members - whether it's about successes, challenges, or how the association has benefited them. This could be done through a regular series in your newsletter or even through a social media series featuring photos or video content. The visual side of storytelling is just as important as words, so prioritize gathering content such as real video and photos that fit the culture you are trying to build.

Celebrate Achievements

Whether it's professional milestones or hard-earned awards, public recognition of accomplishments within your association help to foster pride and engage members. Celebrating these wins reinforces that your people are valued and appreciated. This is another tactic that can easily be added to your existing communications calendar, whether it's a print publication, a social media series, or some combination of both.

Showcase Diverse Voices

Make sure your communications reflect the diversity of your membership. Feature stories from members with different backgrounds,



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MEMBER UPDATES TO SHARE?
EXCITING NEWS TO ANNOUNCE?
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experiences, and locations. This promotes inclusivity and strengthens the feeling of belonging across your association.

Consider creating a member speaker's bureau to track which members are comfortable speaking or writing on various topics related to your industry. This could be as simple as a spreadsheet that tracks names, contact information, and preferred topics, making it easier to ensure inclusivity.

Engage Your Members

Encourage more interaction and input from your members through communication channels. Regular surveys and polls help you gauge members' thoughts and opinions. You can also ask members to contribute content. This gives them a greater

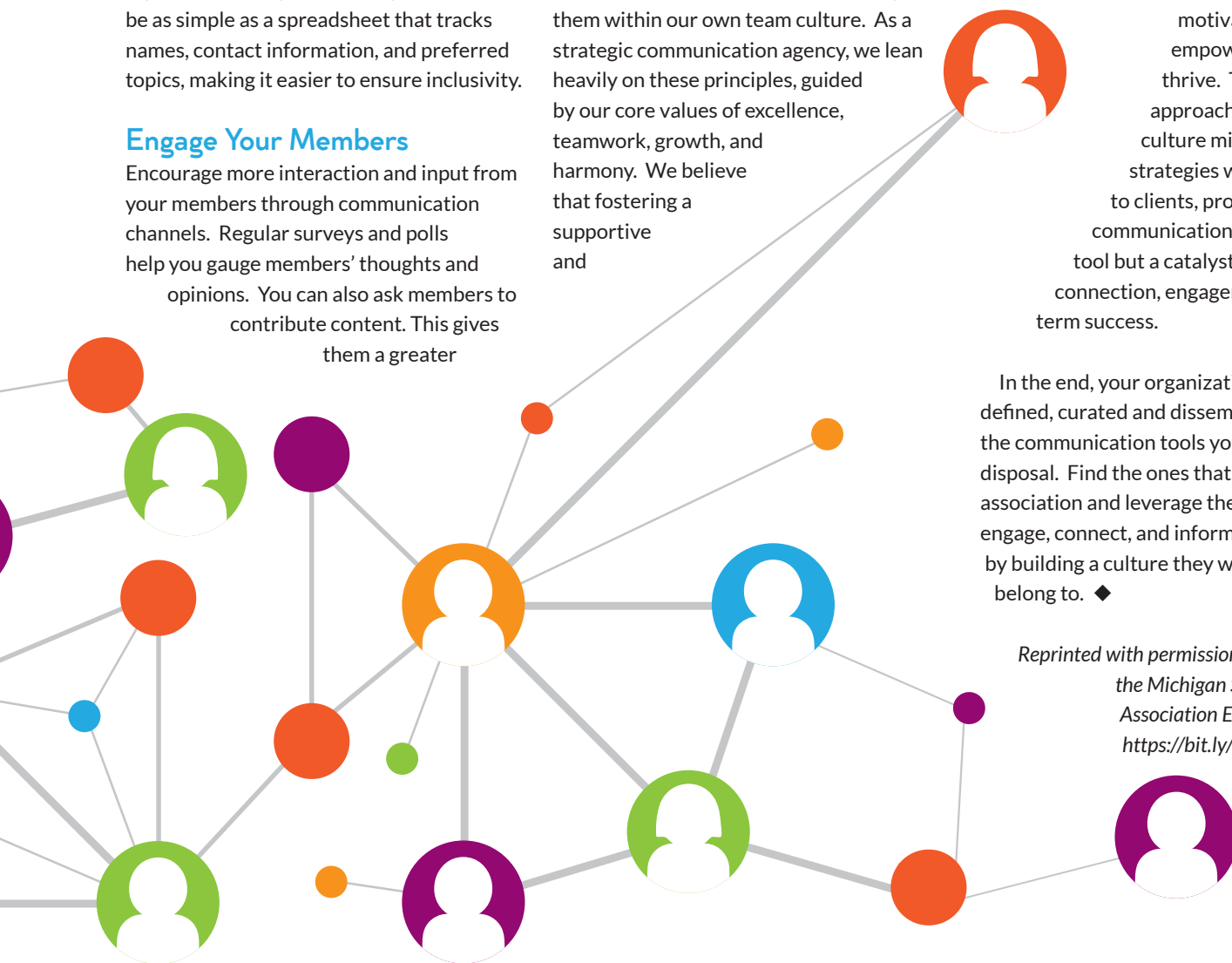
sense of ownership and eases the burden on staff to write everything. It could be recurring columns or guest content that rotates among different members.

At Bellwether Public Relations, we not only champion on these communication tactics for our clients, but also embody them within our own team culture. As a strategic communication agency, we lean heavily on these principles, guided by our core values of excellence, teamwork, growth, and harmony. We believe that fostering a supportive and

healthy internal culture is foundational to delivering exceptional work externally. By prioritizing open and transparent communication, celebrating team successes and aligning every interaction with our mission and values, we create an environment where our team members feel valued, motivated and empowered to thrive. This intentional approach to internal culture mirrors the strategies we recommend to clients, proving that strong communication is not only a tool but a catalyst for meaningful connection, engagement, and long-term success.

In the end, your organization's culture is defined, curated and disseminated through the communication tools you have at your disposal. Find the ones that work for your association and leverage their utility to engage, connect, and inform your members by building a culture they will all want to belong to. ♦

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SOME OF OUR FAVORITE THINGS

MEETING PLANNER TIPS AND TOOLS FROM OUR MEMBERS

The March Coffee and Conversations was about meeting tips and tricks. For those who couldn't make it, and those who did attend but wanted to learn more, here are the products that were discussed, and a few extras too!

MISSOURI PRIMARY CARE ASSOCIATION

Machelle Hansens' Favorites

Lanyards → positivepromotions.com

Name Badge Holders, Name Badge Labels, Ribbons → namebadgeproductions.com



namebadgeproductions.com
4" Stick-n-Stack Fun Ribbons



namebadgeproductions.com
3" Stick-n-Stack Horizontal Ribbons



namebadgeproductions.com
4" x 3" Name Badge Inserts



namebadgeproductions.com
4" x 3" Meeting Heavy Duty Holder

MISSOURI ASSOCIATION OF INSURANCE AGENTS

April Underwood's Favorites

Badge Holders → Our group uses double-pocket plastic badge holders. We stuff the extra pocket with drink tickets and applicable ribbons so they have everything handy when they register, and they like using it for drink tickets and even business cards.

Registration Desks → I prefer the two-tier registration if a hotel offers it, so we can hide things in front of us, keep people from reaching over, and keep things within easy reach during the registration process.



Charging Station ➡ We offer a charging station in the back of the classrooms that can be sponsored by our partners. We purchased three multi-device chargers and labeled them with our logo. We then put them in the back of the room with a sign that says “Charging station sponsored by...” We all know what its like to be traveling and forget your charger.

Sign Holder/Easel ➡ We recently found two different sign holders that although a little more expensive than the easels, they take up less space, the wind doesn't knock them down and are surprisingly easy for us to pack to and from the events.

Folding Wagon ➡ We also use a folding wagon on wheels to transport our meeting materials to and from the location. During a conference, they are great for transporting materials to and from the rooms and the storage area. The wagon is definitely one of those 'don't leave the office without it' items for us.



<https://amzn.to/4m4F356>
Charging Station for Multiple Devices



<https://amzn.to/4j9uWcV>
80" Adjustable Sign Stand Tripod



<https://bit.ly/4d0LORm>
Poster Stand for Display

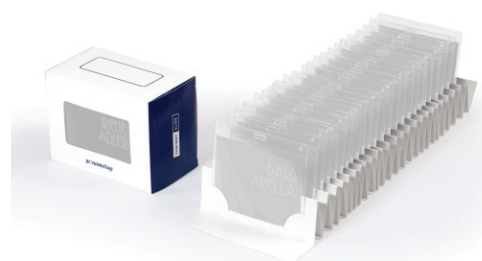
MSAE AND OTHER ASSOCIATIONS

Sarah Luebbert's Favorites

Name Badges ➡ We moved to a new name badge in the past year and are really liking the versatility of it. It is a heavy paper badge that sticks to itself so you can print things on the front and back. Since you don't have to insert it into a plastic holder, it prevents your cuticles from getting torn up. Additionally, I don't feel guilty for trying to salvage the plastic holders for environmental reasons if somebody has stuck a ribbon to it!



<https://bit.ly/V5badge>
4" x 3" Conference Badge, Blank



<https://bit.ly/3EPgeJT>
OneWay Slide Small Name Tag Organizer

Badge Organizer ➡ I travel out of state for a lot of meetings, and I have found that badges can quickly get out of order. We ordered these little holders, and I love them. They are also quite affordable, so I don't feel bad if I only use them for a year before the container gets torn up, and I have to throw them away.

MISSOURI PARK AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION

Sarah Veile's Favorites

Name Badges ➡ We make extra-large, full-color name badges for our conference planning committee. These have our schedule on the back and are flashier, so attendees know they can ask these people for help if they need it. I like to think it also makes the volunteer committee feel special.



THE ACCOUNTABILITY CHECK-UP

How Association Leaders Can Equip Lean Teams, Stay Aligned, and Deliver for Their Members

Michael Lanahan, MBL Ventures | Founder and Principal, mblventuresllc.com

When you became the top leader of your association, no one told you you'd also be the Chief Firefighter. One minute you're prepping a legislative update, the next you're fielding a call from an angry member, and five minutes later, you find out that your keynote speaker canceled on you two days before your annual conference.

If you're like most association leaders, you likely have a lean team, a packed calendar, and a board expecting results. In this fast-paced environment, accountability isn't just a "nice-to-have" part of your team culture — it's your secret weapon to survive and thrive.

When you get accountability right, you can confidently lead your team and your members to new heights. But if you get it wrong, you'll be swamped in constant firefighting with no end in sight.

How can you assess your team's accountability? In this article, we'll run a quick diagnostic check to help you gauge where your team is strong — and where a few targeted improvements could create more capacity, improve communication, and help your staff punch above their weight. Whether you're speaking to hundreds of members or tracking dozens of bills at the Capitol, accountability can help you deliver, even with limited time and people.

A Tale of Two Associations

Let's start with a story.

Association A has a reputation for being disorganized. Their communications are hit-or-miss — one staffer tells members that the annual conference is open for registration, but the website just says, "Save the Date!" Their policy updates are

slow, and members have to find out about major bills from other sources. The team's working hard and means well, but they feel stuck. There's no clarity on who owns what, no feedback on their performance, and no follow-up when something drops. For them, "success" means making it through the day.

Association B, on the other hand, runs like a well-oiled machine. Every team member knows their priorities for the week, and they check in regularly to flag roadblocks and support each other. They've mapped out roles for events, advocacy, and member engagement, even though everyone wears multiple hats. Their executive director doesn't micromanage, but expectations are crystal clear. Staff feel supported, members feel heard, and the board is confident in the path forward.

Both of these teams are working hard, but only one has a culture of accountability, and that makes all the difference.

What Does Accountability Really Mean?

At its core, accountability means that every team member knows what's expected, has what they need to succeed, and follows through. It's not about micromanagement — it's about creating clarity, structure, and support, equipping your team to do exceptional work for your members.

There are **five elements** that drive accountability:

1. Clear Expectations
2. Capabilities
3. Measurement
4. Feedback
5. Consequences

Let's break each one of these down.



Your team has the skills and tools they need to succeed — even while wearing multiple hats.

1. Clear Expectations

What It Means:

Everyone on your team knows what they're supposed to do, what success looks like, and how their work supports your association's overall mission.

Why It Matters for Associations:

When you're juggling events, advocacy, and member communications, misalignment can create chaos fast. One teammate thinks they're in charge of sponsorships, another assumes someone else is handling it. Deadlines slip, members get mixed messages...you get the idea.

Symptoms of a Clear Expectations

Problem:

- Everyone's busy, but there's no real progress.
- Staff aren't sure who owns what.
- Your board or members get conflicting updates.
- Strong performers seem frustrated or hesitant.

What to Do:

Get specific. Define clear roles — even if they overlap. For each major function (e.g., legislative tracking, member events, newsletters), clarify:

- Who owns it
- What success looks like
- Key deadlines or milestones

Write it down, and share it with the team — don't assume everyone knows what you're thinking.

2. Capabilities

What It Means:

Your team has the skills and tools they need to succeed — even while wearing multiple hats.



Everyone on your team knows what they're supposed to do, what success looks like, and how their work supports your association's overall mission

Why It Matters for Associations:

For most associations, you only have a handful of staff. Every teammate needs to be a “high-caliber utility player,” shifting between roles and doing all of them well. That only works if they're equipped with the right skills and tools.

Symptoms of a Capabilities Problem:

- Tasks take way too long, and it's not for lack of effort.
- New systems (CRM, event platforms) cause massive frustration or rarely get used.
- No recent training or professional development.
- Workarounds have become standard operating procedure.

What to Do:

- Take stock of your team's key functions - are they missing key skills or tools?
- Ask your staff what slows them down.
- Invest in one or two small wins — a training, a software upgrade, a process fix — that will pay off in increased capacity and confidence.

3. Measurement

What It Means:

You're tracking performance in ways that drive your team's decisions and demonstrate value to your board and members.

Why It Matters for Associations:

You can't manage what you don't measure. And if you want to stay relevant, you need to show your members and board what's working — and what's not.

Symptoms of a Measurement Problem:

- No one can tell you how this year's member engagement compares to last year's.
- You don't have data on member satisfaction, retention, or key event ROI.
- Success stories are all anecdotal, not evidence-based.
- Your board asks tough questions, and you don't have the data to answer them.

What to Do:

Start small. Pick 3–5 key metrics to track monthly or quarterly, and make data a

THE ACCOUNTABILITY CHECK-UP (con't)

regular part of your team meetings. Some good starting points:

- Event registration vs. capacity
- Member retention or new sign-ups
- Legislative wins/losses
- Response time to member inquiries

4. Feedback

What It Means:

Team members know what they're doing well and where they can improve. Feedback conversations are frequent and timely, not just once a year.

Why It Matters for Associations:

When everyone's juggling five things at once, feedback is rarely a priority. But it's an essential ingredient to help learn, grow, and succeed.

Symptoms of a Feedback Problem:

- You avoid tough conversations to "keep the peace."
- High performers aren't getting coached; they're just thrown in to figure things out on their own.
- Underperformers are surprised when issues come to a head.
- Frustration builds up over time...and then explodes once it becomes a big deal.

What to Do:

Make feedback part of your culture. For starters, you can do a 15-minute debrief after a big project or event. Keep it simple:

- What went well?
- What could've gone better?
- What will we do differently next time?

Your team will improve, your standards will rise, and your members will benefit.

5. Consequences

What It Means:

Great performance gets rewarded. Poor performance gets addressed. Everyone knows the standards and believes they matter.

Why It Matters for Associations:

On small teams, one underperforming staffer can have an outsized impact. When consequences are clear, fair, and timely, performance and team morale improve. When teammates are regularly recognized for stellar work, research shows that they tend to stay at your association longer and do an even better job.

Symptoms of a Consequences Problem:

- You haven't celebrated a team win in months.
- You've received multiple complaints about a team member, but you haven't done anything about it
- Your high performers seem demoralized (and might be job searching).

What to Do:

Build in regular recognition — even small shoutouts in team meetings. Be clear about the consequences when performance slips. And when someone improves, acknowledge it. Accountability and morale go hand-in-hand.

Final Thought:

If accountability isn't one of your top priorities, it absolutely should be. It's a force multiplier that can help you stretch your limited capacity, raise your team's performance, and get better results for your members and board. ♦

About the Author

Michael Lanahan is the Founder of MBL Ventures, a consulting and executive coaching firm that helps private and public sector leaders build strategy, structure, and accountability for their teams. To learn more, please visit www.mblventuresllc.com, or feel free to reach Michael directly at michael@mblventuresllc.com.



When someone improves, acknowledge it. Accountability and morale go hand-in-hand.

REIMAGINING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Creating a Space for Real Conversations

Michelle Walters, *Missouri Health Care Association* | *Director of Meetings & Events*

While the classic breakout room setup—a classroom with a PowerPoint presentation from an industry expert—remains essential for our association’s members, educational needs are evolving. To keep up, we’re adjusting how we approach these spaces. For example, in breakout rooms that provide a “traditional” educational session, we’ve added tall tables around the room to allow attendees to stand or move around, offering more flexibility for those who prefer it.

Through conversations and surveys, we’ve heard that our members want education on the latest industry trends, not just the regulatory or compliance side of the trends or new rules, but also a chance to learn what their peers are doing and/or how they are handling the changes and struggles.

One popular way to deliver this is through peer panels, where a moderator guides the conversation, and panelists share their best practices on the asked questions. We’ve been offering this format for a while, and it continues to resonate with our members.

Last year, we introduced a new format called “Hot Topic Huddles” at our convention. These smaller, more intimate sessions took place in two breakout rooms with simple open-table setups—no podiums, no PowerPoints. A moderator facilitated the conversation, and attendees shared their experiences, challenges, and successes around a specific topic. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, so we’re excited to bring them back again this year.

This year, I’m exploring the idea of adding alternative seating options—like exercise balls, love seats, and comfortable chairs—to see if it further encourages a relaxed, open environment for sharing.



Last year, we introduced a new format called “Hot Topic Huddles” at our convention. These smaller, more intimate sessions took place in two breakout rooms with simple open-table setups—no podiums, no PowerPoints.

As we keep looking for new ways to support our members, we’re excited to see how these changes in breakout sessions can help open discussions between our members. Whether it’s sticking with the tried-and-true panel format or mixing things up with Hot Topic Huddles, we’re committed to

making sure everyone has the chance to share, learn, and connect with each other. I look forward to seeing what happens next and continuing to shape these sessions to better meet our community’s needs. ♦



This year, I’m exploring the idea of adding alternative seating options—like exercise balls, love seats, and comfortable chairs—to see if it further encourages a relaxed, open environment for sharing.

MEMBER NEWS AND UPDATES

New Team Members at Missouri Dental Association



Donna Anderson is the new MDA Administrative Assistant. She is in the office part time Monday – Thursday. Donna lives on a farm near Russellville, Mo. and has worked in dentistry and IT. She was a certified dental assistant and was trained and certified to administer Nitrous Oxide.

She left dentistry to computerize dental and medical practices. Outside of work, Donna enjoys spending time with her family, especially two grandchildren, Ty and Andy. She likes to stay active and enjoys spending time at the lake and playing bocce.



Riley Bernskoetter is the new MDA Program Manager. She will split her time helping with event planning and member outreach. Riley moved back to Taos, Mo. last May after spending five years at Emporia State University in Emporia, Kan., playing volleyball and obtaining both her undergraduate and master's degrees. Prior

to joining MDA, she worked as a financial specialist at Missouri Department of Transportation in their Multimodal-Aviation division. Outside of work Riley enjoys spending time with family at the pool, country concerts, gravel roading or road tripping in general, and playing with her nephew, Knox.

The MDA is a non-profit, professional organization with more than 2,000 members statewide focused on advocacy, education and community. Its mission is Helping All Dental Professionals Succeed.

Member Spotlight – Mandy Lewis



Please tell us who you are, where you work, and what your title is. My name is Mandy Lewis. I work for the Missouri Dental Association (MDA) as the Education & Events Director. I just started my 19th year at MDA.

How long have you been a member of MSAE? I am not sure! That is a hard one to estimate, maybe 15+. I started as the Administrative Secretary for MDA, but moved into different positions over the years, from membership to meetings to allied education and a little bit of everything in between.

Why do you belong to MSAE? When I started the meetings position, I really enjoyed the events that brought all the hotels and vendors together at one spot, along with the CE (Event Summit).

Staff Update at MPRA



Kerri Kelley is the new part-time Meeting & Event Specialist at Missouri Park and Recreation Association, where she will assist the Region and Section leaders with planning quarterly meetings, educational events, and fundraisers. Kerri will also help plan and assist with the Maintenance Rodeos and annual Conference. With over 15 years of

experience in parks and recreation and environmental education, Kerri has worked at organizations such as Wicomico County Parks, Recreation and Tourism, the Missouri Botanical Garden, and Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri. She currently works full-time at the City of St. Peters Parks and Recreation Department as their Marketing & Sponsorships Specialist. Her expertise includes event planning and management, which has helped her deliver many large, sold-out events throughout her career.

Kerri is a Certified Park and Recreation Professional and has received many “Outstanding Performance” awards from the City of St. Peters for her work on the Sensory Trail Sponsorship Guide and educational signage, design and distribution of the St. Peters Parks and Recreation magazine, Rec-Connect, and the new City of St. Peters website. Passionate about professional development and community, Kerri is excited to bring her experience, organizational skills, and enthusiasm to MPRA’s mission of advocating for the quality of life through the effective use of parks and recreation opportunities, education, and resources. Outside of work, Kerri enjoys cheering on the New York Rangers, hiking, baking, and volunteering at a local animal shelter.

I also enjoy the addition of the Coffee & Conversations event and have attended several of those.

What are your hobbies, interests or community involvements? I love to decorate, do crafts and scrapbook. I have an Etsy shop that keeps me busy outside of work, and I love to watch our 17-year-old son play baseball all spring and summer long.

What is your favorite quote or inspirational saying? “Always remember you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.”

What is your ideal day? Most days and weekends are so busy that I love a day off during the week, just staying home and relaxing.

Do you have a favorite place to visit in Missouri? The Lake of the Ozarks.

JULY 10, 2025

**STONE CREEK HOTEL
COLUMBIA, MO**



Missouri EVENT SUMMIT

The Missouri Event Summit is the premier gathering for event planners and association executives to connect with top meeting destinations, hotels, and event venues. This dynamic event fosters networking, collaboration, and inspiration, making it the go-to opportunity for planning unforgettable events in Missouri.

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Our Mission

The mission of MSAE is to promote and support excellence and professionalism among association staff and to work diligently to increase the effectiveness, the image, and the impact of associations as they serve their members and society.



Learn