

# Association Chat Podcast: “How to Prepare for Recession: An Association Leaders Strategy Guide”

Recorded live online Monday, March 23, 2020 2-3 pm EST

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## Transcript

- All right, we're live and recording. And I just want to say thanks to everyone who is here with us. Welcome to [Association Chat](#), an online discussion with the Association community where we warm ourselves by the virtual fire with the topic of the day welcoming thought leaders and trailblazers alike to join up in this online home for the community. I'm the host of the Association Chat, [KiKi L'Italien](#).

It is very possible that we are headed into difficult economic times and, increasingly possible, a recession. Even if we try to hide, it won't help. How should you think through crisis management for your organizations? How have associations gone from terrible to great during a crisis in the past? What is the best next thing that you can do for your association right now? What actions can help association leaders lead effectively in industries of all kinds? We're gonna talk about that today. I want you to join me as I interview Glenn Tecker. He's the co-CEO of [Tecker International](#), the man of the hour and Tecker International, which I'm happy and proud to be a part of. We are going to discuss how leaders can best prepare for a recession. Glenn is widely acknowledged as one of the world's foremost experts on association non-profit leadership and strategy. He assists organizations in identifying the right strategy to address their challenges of today and tomorrow. Welcome Glenn. I'm so glad we're doing this.

- Delighted to be with you.

- So--

- By the way, let me begin by thanking you KiKi and Association Chat for the extraordinary job that you are doing in curating what is at the moment an overwhelming stream of advice, information and offers that are being extended to our community. There's not a lot of places that large numbers of people trust as a quality control intermediary and you and Association Chat are one of them.

- Oh, thank you. Thank you so much. I really appreciate that.

These are definitely interesting times. I know that with the people that we are connected with, our friends, our family, our colleagues, our peers, we are, our clients, ...we are hearing that they are facing some extraordinary challenges right now both on a personal and professional level.

And for associations we are constantly working with, representing industries and sciences and these missions that are critical that still need to go on, people are really worried. They're worried about the economy. And as the coronavirus is bringing this U.S. economy to a slow down, if not a complete halt, a lot of people are worried about a recession coming. What have you been hearing?

- Sure, **let's talk a little bit about what we are observing as the source of that anxiety.** It has to do with what we know and what we don't know. What we know is that all the experts are saying that a recession is very likely. What we don't know is how deep or how long that recession will be. What we do know is that we have been through significant recessions before. What we don't know is how the current availability of virtual technology is going to affect the nature of the responses to that recession over time. What we do know is that the impact of the recession will differ from region to region and from industry to industry. So with that said of what we know and what we don't know in mind it leads to possible strategies or responding to the particular conditions that we observe and the particular situation that each association's members find themselves in. And we find that's gonna be key.

**An association's response needs to be driven by the understanding that you have of what the direct impact of the recession will be on your members.**

That requires some qualitative research to really understand what is most important to them with a particular focus on things that they are dependent on for their business, for their profession, for the pursuit of their own personal objectives that are no longer available to them. Is it possible for the association to become the new source for them of those things? For me, it kind of takes us back to the basic core purpose of an association. Every association on the planet was founded for the same reason and that is a group of people discovered that there were some things of value and worth that they could do better together than any one of them could do alone. So the fundamental strategic question for associations during a recession are what are those things now?

In strategy, associations are always balancing the aspirational with the actionable. And one of the things that occurs in tough times like recessions is the cursor between the two ends of that continuum tend to slide more towards the actionable. That is, "what can we do now to be of immense value given the conditions?" But **the associations that have demonstrated the ability to sustain that success over time have always managed to find how to provide value at the moment, but in a fashion that's consistent with their longer range and envisioned future.** And that's a balance that requires quite a good bit of conversation in tough times.

So another piece of advice that we have based upon experience in 2008, and before and also after is that it, **is it absolutely essential that an association senior staff do not allow their volunteer leadership to disengage.** That should be known to require some very difficult and complicated choices. And they are going to need the understanding and support of their elected and volunteer leaders perhaps even more so than ever. So engaging them in conversations

about some of the tough questions, engaging them in conversation about the tough choices that may have to be made is not going to be a nicety. It's going to be a necessity.

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- What do some of those discussions look like? Because I can imagine that even in the best of times leaders get nervous, maybe not nervous, but you know of course very concerned about, "how should I proceed with these discussions that I have with the leaders in my organization?" And at a time like this, I can't imagine how much stress there is that's surrounding a decision to reach out. You're afraid every single communication that you have could blow up in your face. So what is this [kind of communication], what does this tend to look like?

- They're, very interestingly, **they are high level strategic choices that have intensely detailed practical implications.** So for example, **this is the time to begin to begin to look for potential partners.** Other organizations that we can coordinate with, cooperate with, collaborate with, or if things become extremely dire and an association loses the minimal critical mass necessary to be a value to perhaps even unify with.

And those are not the same strategies. The coordination means that you identify kind of a third party who will help you make some decisions about who will do what. Coordination means that the parties together decide who will do what. Collaboration means that the parties do something together. And unification means that interested organizations design a new organization that will be a successor to them that will combine all of the tangible and intangible assets of each.

It's a strategic approach to creating consolidation of relationships that is very different than the traditional legal or accounting approach that ends up making judgements not on the basis of what would increase value, but basing judgements on the basis of who has how many dollars, who has how many noses, or who has how many doorknobs.

**So a second immediate issue is choosing your staff strategy very strategically.** And this is particular tough at the moment because we do not know how long people will be ordered not to go to work. So you need to make some choices. And there's kind of an order of preference to them that history has shown us positions the organization with the right kind of reputation. If you can put people on paid leave or have them continue to work virtually. If you can't do that then think about reducing everyone's pay rather than laying off, particularly reducing the pay temporarily for those who are the biggest donors, the CEO needs to demonstrate leadership by modeling the importance of the behavior that he or she is asking of others. If you can't do that try to furlough rather than lay off. But what's critical now is to check the impact on unemployment compensation and health insurance for your staff. We don't know what kind of interventions will be provided by government at this point. And what government decides to do in terms of helping organizations basically whether they try to decide to take ASAE's advice and provide some substantial support to not for profit organizations or not, not knowing what that

intervention will be means that almost a daily basis execs will need to be making decisions about what the best staff strategy is to maintain that core. And that's the third issue.

**The third issue is to maintain your core.** Focus on your core members, on your core purpose, on your core values, on your core programs, and on your core staff. What you must do we have learned from previous economic compressions is preserve the base that you will need to regrow from once the business cycle alters and begins to move in another direction. And there is no disagreement at least at the moment that this is a business cycle caused by something that is not been a cause before but the reality of the impact is experience that we have in fact had before.

- So when you have, when you're evaluating your core and you're looking at, you know, what is it that's advancing our purpose, what are our core programs, obviously you're going to find those things that aren't right. You're gonna find that the "fat," and this is maybe a time to cut the fat is what I'm hearing.

- Well, this is a tough one. Since 2008, the last compression that we had, very few associations have any real fat left. There are very few programs that are not serving anyone. So there's a different set of variables that we need to apply to identify candidate programs for either going dark, suspending them. Engaging in orderly divestment, overcoming the exit barriers and slowing getting out of them, or immediate abandonment, just backing away. So we've decided through our firm, **we found that there were really three criteria that need to be applied** assuming that there really is no fat.

One, **make sure you are focusing on those programs, on those things that members can no longer afford otherwise.** Be their source of stability. If anything else help them feel that they have control over their own destiny. Their emotional response to what you are able to do for them as a community they belong to will be remembered long after they are, they remain aware of the particular programs that were involved.

**Second, look for programs that are currently serving a declining population.** They become candidates for a change. Look for programs that are serving a declining need. They become candidates for a significant change. Most importantly look for programs that are meeting a need that are now being met by other means than the means that you have historically employed. Associations' biggest competitors now are not other places but other spaces. So if you have been in a business line like information distribution those programs need to be assessed against other places and methodologies that can be employed to access the same information. So the criteria that we employ remain, things like program attractiveness. How central to the vision, the mission and the goals of the organization is a particular program?

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**Competitive position, do you have the tangible and intangible assets needed to really do this well?** But in this era it will also be alternative coverage. Who else or where else can folks go to get the needs met that that program has been meeting. And if you find many other places or one or two other places especially if the way in which they are providing access given current conditions is of superior value to your members then you have a, we believe in strategic and ethical obligation to help your members find that resource rather than continue to be the source.

- You know, this is interesting because as you were talking I know that also in the association industry right now obviously because there's so much disruption in how a lot of service providers, solution providers a lot of the things that they do having to do with events or in person meetings has changed, consultants too. The way that we meet with clients and everything, we can see there's a lot of messaging that's going out that's pitching services. And when we're talking about, (and solutions), and when we're talking about looking at these different sets of variables for even just deciding what a leader and an organization choose to keep on and how they can determine what they can keep and what might need to go. It seems like a very difficult time to try to push or pitch new stuff, right?

- It's difficult but also inviting. So let me explain.

- Yeah.

**- Tough times are often a perfect time to engage in experimentation and innovation. But there are some caveats.**

**One is understand that in innovation is a change that makes things better, a change that doesn't make things better is an experiment at best.** That is something to learn from. So you need to be prepared to fail, but that means two things. If you're experimenting and innovating you need to have permission from your elected leadership to engage in the experimentation.

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We have yet to see a board that is opposed to innovation, but we find many boards that are very reticent to engage in experimentation especially when the economic status of the organization is a longer term strategic issue for them. **So along with getting permission to experiment we also need to put in place methodology for quickly monitoring and frequently monitoring the success of the experiment that we're engaged in.**

**We've got to demonstrate that we have in place a systematic way of managing risk,** because if we don't demonstrate we have the ability to manage risk fear of risk will become the primary determinant to taking advantage of the opportunity for experimentation.

So, it's another for ensuring your volunteer leaders are not allowed to disengage at a time when they're probably, as you suggested early on, very concerned about their family, their own sources of income, their own business, their own employees. So, giving them the opportunity to

participate will not just provide additional support for innovation within the association, but will also provide additional opportunity for your leadership to maintain a sense that even though they are in a situation that they can not control they are still in a situation that they can influence.

There is nothing inherently good or evil about most contextual changes. **What tends to make them good or bad has as much to do with how we respond to them as it has to do with the nature of the circumstances themselves.** So, hopefully, we will find association creating opportunities by identifying what possibilities exist and recognizing that members very consciously membership has become more diverse than ever before will provide advice that's a lot of if this then that advice rather than assume that your membership is monolithic what we'll want to do is identify that the particular circumstances of segments of our membership, *primarily based upon valuegraphics, not demographics*, so that we are able to provide to them alternative scenarios from which they can pick what particular direction to pursue given their own particular circumstances.

That's going to bring us back to **strategic thoughtfulness, not just strategic planning.**

The identification of alternatives, the consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of each of those alternatives, a selection that is confident based upon the information we have at the moment with recognition of what we don't know, quick implementation, and having in place and method for early and frequent assessment of whether the choice that we made was the right choice. **That's advice we need to give to our members, but it's also advice that associations need to follow ourselves.**

- Yeah, I, there's so much in there and one of the best things about, what I love about talking with you and, you know, whenever I have the chance to learn from you but you, there are about 15 things in what you just said that I want to ask more questions about. And just talking about the fact that there needs to be strategic thoughtfulness and not just strategic planning. Not just, there has to be more to it than just that is I think well worth taking just a moment to think about and to ponder. So, folks, and Anne, I see that you said that the video is struggling for you. Is anyone else having trouble with the video? If you want to type into the chat let me know. Hopefully not. On my side everything looks clear. So hopefully the recording and everything will be good for replay. Kathy says, "Looks good." Donna says, "Yes, no problems for me." Thank you.

All right, so we've talked about the first three different elements that you talked about as far as approach. And we were talking about maintaining core programs and purpose, maintaining the core. So, could you help me with the fourth one. What's the fourth area that we move into?

- Well, there's our **focusing on our core mission.** Remind people why we have decided to come together as an organization. Focus on the outcomes that we are trying to achieve. Keep people energized. Also, focus on our core values.

There are some judgements that we've made in our strategic conversations about the ways that we need to behave in order to be able to fulfill our purpose and accomplish our mission. It's the parameters within which our brand, upon which our brand is based, not abandon that. Do not stray so to speak, or abandon or compromise those beliefs that are so fundamentally held. You would suffer a consequence or a penalty rather than abandon or compromise them. **Using the current circumstances as an excuse for abandoning the ethical and behavioral commitments that you've made as an organization.**

- Okay, pause.

- Hold steadfast.

- Pause right there because, okay, you brought up a really important point that I think that it's, it might be worth restating and maybe emphasizing at this point. This is the time when it really is where you are showing that you are not just "talking the talk, but you're walking the walk," right? This is the chance for organizations to show that they really are backing up everything that they say that they're about and that we are supposed to be making decisions based upon that, right? We're supposed to be making the best decisions we can that show that, "We deserve your loyalty, members!"

We deserve (trust), our intentions are clear and we are ethical. And that ethics part of it is so important.

Edelman came out with their latest [Edelman Trust Barometer 2020](#) report and in the trust barometer report what we found about, of course trust is in decline worldwide. We know this. NGOs, non governmental organizations, tend to do better in trust but not across the board and not in all areas. They define trust as being brought in due to competency and due to ethics. And so **being able to show that you're able to show that you're both component and ethical is critical to ensuring loyalty and trust in the people who follow you.**

- Absolutely, years ago one of our partners observed that in associations in particular what trust was was the residue of promises kept.

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- I love that. I love that.

- So when we talk about sustaining trust in this particular environment it becomes especially important that leadership avoids making promises that it can not keep. It's especially important that where there are limitations to what you are thinking you be truthful and honest about the limitations. **If there has ever been a time for an honest conversation absent hyperbole and empty promotions this is the time for it.**

**How you behave through this difficult time will in large measure whether that trust is sustained over time.** We know that one of the things that distinguishes our not for profit

community from other places where folks can go to get services and get products is the desire for community, the desire for connection. And connection will only be maintained when folks trust and enjoy those with whom they are connected. So it becomes extremely important for associations to focus on the nature of the experience that it's members, especially it's core members are going to have and not just focus on the economic considerations that in such situations can take on disproportionate importance.

For example, we know that at the moment moving to virtual environments is a solution for sustaining the ability to provide service when folks are not allowed to gather in groups larger than 10 or in several states even leave their homes except for emergencies or necessary supplies. It is likely that associations will discover that the cost of virtual events is much less than the cost of face to face meetings. However, they will also discover that if you're talking about educational events the margin that comes from virtual events is infinitesimal compared to the margin that comes from face to face events.

One of my friends from the Pennsylvania Society for Association Executives just observed that it would take 100 webinars to produce the same revenue that they would produce from a meeting of 50 people. So, what we need to do is to take into account the purpose of the gathering and then match the platform and the approach to that purpose. So, I guess I'm using that as kind of a story like example of the need to be conscious of what we are trying to accomplish. Making strategic judgements about the best approach to accomplish those outcomes. And not allowing ourselves to be disproportionately driven by concern about expenses at the moment.

- Right, I think one of the big challenges that even those who are well versed in leadership and strategy it's usually knowing that a certain set of, you've got a certain set of things that are knowns that you know, for example, that you're going to have, say, a certain event at a certain time every year. You know that your membership is going to be around this amount. You know there are certain knowns that we've been accustomed to working with. And in the middle of something like this [Coronavirus impact] that is not finite... or it is maybe finite, but we don't know where that end is yet, right? Things are changing. We have to somehow sort of "surf the wave" as we're going along. Making these decisions when you can't have some of these things as knowns is very difficult. And so **how are you advising people to do that because, you know, a lot of the playbooks that people have been operating from are no longer going to work. So, how do you lead in the middle of the change?**

- You do some projection. You do a lot of strategic thinking. You make sure that you have a way of testing whether the assumptions you are making while you are in an era of the unknown pan out to be true or not. So you can alter, abandon, or adapt those commitments more quickly than you might otherwise.

It's fascinating. The last couple of days I've been getting a lot of tweets from folks who have referenced back to some projections that we made in the middle of 2019 before the current compression occurred. And they're reposting them because they've turned out to be absolutely correct. Two projections that I would share at the moment, **one is that we will see more and**



**more organizations taking advantage of virtual events.** Where we will see that face to face that virtual is a false dichotomy. That in fact **greatest value to the greatest number can be provided by creating an effective blend of both.**

The second projection that I will make, and I think that this one is a little more risky, is I **do believe that after we emerge from this current situation, and again we have no idea really when that will be, we're going to see a large number of people who are more than ever looking forward for opportunities to gather face to face.** And I base that projection on a simple experiment we did years ago among our partnership.

This was in the 1990s when, and maybe in the late 80s when AT&T first developed the opportunity for there to be video conferencing and part of what we did as a partnership because AT&T was a client of ours at the time was using video conferencing we went drinking together. And it just was not the same. You know, telling a bad joke and having a pretzel thrown at you and it bounces off the screen is not the same as being there together. Humans aren't built for that kind of contact. And I suspect that either consciously or unconsciously those who, a lot of folks are gonna feel more isolated than ever before, at least [corpuscular](#)-ly, if that's a word, and will be looking for opportunities to gather together.

- All right, you know I agree.

- That pent-up demand is going to be part of what enables good thinking associations to emerge from the doldrums.

- I hope so. And I think that. I would hope that that is a projection that turns out to be true. I think that we're very lucky and fortunate that we have technology such that it is that the coronavirus impact hasn't been more disruptive. It certainly has been difficult for people to work from home or to try to make this happen. But on the positive side of it, can you imagine trying to do this 20 years ago? It would have been even more difficult and more people would have lost (even more) jobs and it just would have been impossible to try to keep things going in a lot of cases.

- Also, keep in mind that previous experiences we have had with economic downturns have not been driven by the inability of people to gather together. They have been driven by the inability of the economics of the time to pay for people being together. This is very very different.

So you have just observed the current solution that we have is directly and particular consistent with what the problem is. As we move forward, that may not continue to be the case depending upon what continues to drive the economic displacement that is occurring.

- Well, let's talk a little bit about that too because I think trying to make these, trying to make good financial decisions right now is extremely stressful and you've given us some really great guidelines about programs, how to evaluate programs and to decide whether it's something that we should take risks, educated risks, experimentation versus innovation and what that looks like. And I love checking in, basically incorporating your leadership in on that so that you're not

trying to act and keep them out of all of this [decision-making], which I haven't heard much said about that point anywhere else. So I think that that's really important.

- And what it is is the question of **where to invest**. One of the places where that continuum that is sliding from aspirational to actionable is going to take on some very practical implications that are going to require some very detailed and hopefully time tested methods for helping to make the decision.

- What are some things you shouldn't do?

- **One thing that you, that an association shouldn't do is abandoning a good strategy that is an essential investment for the future.** It will be very difficult to get back to where you were if in fact you totally eliminate the platform you are building. You may want to scale back a little bit, but don't abandon it just to save some bucks along the way.

**Second, it is absolutely essential that you have an up to date strategy, and up to date fiscal strategy that is the monetary manifestation of that program strategy.** One that you are assessing and adjusting periodically with more with adjustments more close to each other than would normally be the case. Understand what your priorities will be before you need to execute them.

But there are methodologies like doing Ian [MacMillan's Matrix](#), strategic program analysis, things from the [Boston Consulting Group](#).

I mean there are a variety of methodologies that one can employ that provide a rational basis for making judgments about what the future of a program should be given current and anticipated conditions and performance of the program. Having said that it's also essential that leadership recognizes those will continue to be very emotional, very political, and oftentimes passionate decisions, particularly when you're making a significant change in a program that is relished and worshiped by a particular segment of the membership. For example, past presidents who see that program as their personal contribution to a better planet for having support from their members. Other members and long time leaders are going to be a, I'll call it a survival strategy for us, not just a thriving strategy towards us.

So one of the things that we may need to do to help make very hard choices is to use some tools that have been available for a while but really in the past have only been applied in very serious situations. An example I will give you, in 2008 you'll recall the economic problem was produced by over-leverage of paper money by the banking and financial industry, particularly the mortgage industry. And one of the groups that we worked with at that time was the Mortgage Bankers Association. So imagine what occurred. We had to help them take a multimillion-dollar budget and program portfolio down to about 20% of the previous size and we had to do it in six months. So what we did was we created an information base about the programs using qualitative research with membership looking at the actual behavior of members in those programs and online where the programs were online using the McMillan Matrix as a

methodology for rationally for looking at what the likely future would be. And that produced some, let's call it profiles for each of the programs.

What we had to do was to use a forced-choice matrix to decide which programs would be suspended or eliminated in what order depending upon what the financial realities were. Now here's how the forced-choice matrix works and I share it as an example, not advocating it as the tool to use all the time. But you identify each of your business lines and/or programs, or activities within the programs the level at which you were is a judgment that you make. And you compare for example program A to program B. You say, if we had to choose between program A and program B which would we choose? If we had to choose between program A and program C which would we choose? If we had to choose between program A and program D which would we choose? And literally, you are comparing the preference for each program to every other program. Then you count up the number of times a program has been chosen as being preferable to others. And that gives you a frequency distribution that almost always ends up in high, middle and low. But even if it doesn't end up in high, middle and low it gives you a rational rating of each of the programs that allows you to create a listing of which programs are the most attractive candidates for either abandonment or organized divestment or suspension.

So the question then becomes "who participates in this?" The answer that found is that it needs to be what A, whatever group needs to ultimately make the decision to "go" or "no go" because if they are involved in it they will be part owners of the judgment. And also those individuals who will need to feel comfort that the decision has been made in a rational basis. At a minimum that means senior staff and officers. The larger group that we found is the best group to engage is the board and senior staff so that there is understanding and support from those who the organization's governance process has identified as the folks empowered with the fiduciary responsibility to say yes or no are actively involved in making those decisions.

- I really value what you're sharing with us because I think that it's so important to think not just in terms of having a set of here are the five things that you need to do to make the best decisions, but really taking the time to go into why each of these things is more important.

- Absolutely. What execs need to do in our judgment is to **ensure that the organization doesn't suffer from opinion rich and information poor decision making.**

- Right.

- If there was any time to take into account all that we know and don't know in order to be confident in hard choices we're going to make this is that point in time. We counsel organizations to avoid situations where you have groups making decisions that know so little about the decisions they are making that they don't even know what they don't know. Because they will move quickly to a solution just to prove to themselves that they can take it off the table because they're, they're bright enough to know they're uncomfortable with having to decide, but

insufficiently expertise or experienced to know what the alternatives are. So the smart group will be very cognizant of what it doesn't know and seek that insight from places that do.

- It's such a key and I want to remind everyone who's watching this live. You do have the ability to ask your questions if you have a question for Glenn ask your questions in the comments and we'll be sure to address those as we're going along. But this is amazing, amazing stuff. That's the thing is that because it is a time when people are challenged no matter who you are in the United States right now we are having to face social distancing, disruption in every industry, disruption in our economy and so the chances for making an error in this area where we are opinion rich and information poor as you said is so heavy. People are wanting to show leadership. They are uncomfortable being in uncertain times and they are, maybe because of that feeling, compelled to arrive at decisions in a different way than they normally would, ...and that's not always a better way.

- Agreed.

- And so I think it's interesting what you're sharing with this because that decision making these are not normal times. Because of that, we have to be very aware of how we're making the decisions we are.

- **And be more nimble than ever before.** Now what I mean by that is **for associations in challenging times, not knowing can not be used as an excuse for not deciding.** Not deciding is a decision. Sometimes it's the right decision. "Do nothing" is sometimes the best strategy. But what it will require is two things.

One, carefully identifying what all your alternatives are. Considering the advantages and disadvantages of each of those alternatives from multiple perspectives and from the perspective of multiple stakeholder groups. Based upon that common understanding then making a decision. But when you are making a decision based upon assumption not knowing for sure and interestingly enough whenever we're thinking about the future by definition that's the one we can't know for sure. We need to build in the ability to employ criteria that will allow us to monitor and adjust the decisions that we have made based upon those assumptions either in response to changes in the environment or in response to an experience that we have in implementing the decision. Now that's not a new way of working. That's how strategic thinking and good management have operated forever. What is different in times of crisis is that the periods of time between reassessment and adjustment have to be much shorter than they are normally. And that means continuous conversation between the decision-makers and the examiners of possibilities with a higher degree of engagement than has occurred before. And of course the challenge is that when folks are concerned about their own existence their ability find the discretionary time to participate in a collaborative group that's working on behalf of a larger community is an even greater challenge. While it's a greater challenge it becomes absolutely more essential.

- I have a question [from the chat]. "This is an incredibly rich and dense conversation. Will there be a recording sent to participants?" Absolutely Jenny, absolutely. The recording will be sent after this as soon as we are done with this there will be a replay that's available. So a few minutes. I think it's within 10 minutes after the recording is done and I will be sending a link to everyone that will have not just the recording but also some of the resources that were mentioned during this discussion. So thanks for asking Jenny, I really appreciate that.

- You can also tell Jenny that we are working on putting together some written guidance along these lines as well. We're waiting for, in a sense, the right time. **We think that we're already at the point where folks need to begin, particularly leaders, need to begin thinking over the current horizon.** And much of what we're talking about requires some thinking and preparation for over the current horizon. And I would add that to the list in that **effective leaders in the past and in the present have always been those who see as their primary responsibility ensuring that the question what's next is what is getting considered and answered, not just what do we do now, but what's next.** So looking over the current horizon not necessarily being a source of the answers, but ensuring that answers are being, potential answers are being cultivated is one of the things that we have observed over time separates the really exemplary association leaders from those that are oh shall we say, maintainers of the status quo.

- That's putting it very kindly because there are, you know, we're talking about ways where you can go really really right and make really really good positive decisions, but certainly, there are definitely ways where you can go really really wrong. Just for kicks could you walk me down that pathway? Could you share what should people absolutely *not* do right now? What would be your top three list of "don't do's" for people listening?

- Yeah, **one of the things that I would suggest is that this is not the time to try and increase the size of membership by moving to adjacent marketplaces.** The positive is focus on your core. Serve those that are already committed to you so that you maintain not necessarily their allegiance, but their engagement and respect for your value proposition. So trying to reach new markets merely for the purpose of growing revenue or growing membership numbers would be we believe a significant mistake today.

**Second, don't hesitate to try some new things, but make sure that the new things that you are trying are validated by the behavior of those that you are trying to service with those new things and not just being undertaken on the basis of uninformed opinion by staff members or elected leaders.** What you do now has to match your cultures. And you've heard me just now use the plural rather than the singular. Associations are peculiar in many ways. One of the ways that they are particularly peculiar is that in associations there are multiple cultures. Your industry or profession may have one culture. Your staff may have another culture. Your volunteer leadership may have another culture. So, in this instance in making decisions about new things to try or do really be very confident that what you are trying

is matching the value set, aspirations and needs of the culture of the particular group that you're trying to respond to.

**The third "no-no" that I would suggest is don't be scared and don't panic.** Even if circumstances warrant it it does very little good. If you don't look like you have a practical and realistic view and a path forward given that practical and realistic view it is unlikely others will be willing to depend upon you. So even when you don't know be realistic enough to say that you don't know. When something doesn't work be truthful enough to say it's not working. Be prepared to spend as much time listening to how people are feeling about things as you are spending time listening to the people who are telling you what to do. So, don't look frantic. Don't look scared. But also don't look arrogant and all-knowing. And what I mean look what I'm really talking about is engaging in behavior that will be perceived by others in ways that may not be what you intend it to be perceived as... You've got to be sensitive to the fact that people's antennas are up higher than normal and probably facing a different directions than they often are because they are concerned and scared. They're looking not necessarily for Pollyannaish comfort. What they're looking for is a sense that we will make our way through this, that the paths through it will constantly evolve already are apparent. More than anything we can do this because we've been through this before.

What most folks are going to experience now, most association leaders as they move to evolve the organization to fit the challenges of the new reality is resistance to the change, not opposition. **Opposition occurs when you are suggesting a change and people are opposed to it. They don't like it. Resistance occurs when you are suggesting a change and people do not understand what you're proposing. Because of that, it creates an anxiety.**

The anxiety is based upon two questions that are not answered.

**The first question is, "What will it be like?"** So to the extent possible, you need to create a compelling vision of what it will be like or at least a comforting vision of what it will be like.

**The second question is more personal and difficult. And that is, "Will I be able to handle it?"** And that's the question that at the moment is emerging in the forefront of the minds of most. The way that you intervene in that anxiety is to demonstrate your comfort in their competence. And the best way to do that is to remind them that this is not the first time we have been through this. We have seen these changes before.

Our industry and our association has always effectively responded to them either by altering and evolving our own program of work or by joining forces of other organizations who may be experiencing the same diminution of that critical mass required to be a value. There is no rule or law engraved on a block of granite that says that every association has a right to continue to exist in perpetuity. When you reach the point where you are no longer providing sufficient value

then it's time to either dissolve or to unify with another organization to reclaim the minimal cumulative interest needed to be of value.

Associations don't exist just to do stuff. They exist to do stuff with a high value of meaning. And even though the crisis of the moment makes us anxious and nervous, causes us to find focus and focus down, the reality is that associations as organizations were really meant to run marathons. They were not meant to run sprints. What we are trying to do is to pursue outcomes of long term high value that require consistent and organized attention over time. And as we make these more immediate adjustments to stay afloat we have to demonstrate that we're offering a boat that is useful for people to remain in, that it's in their best interest to stay in the boat rather than give them the opportunity to decide that they would be better off jumping out of the boat and trying to swim in the white water alone. And the more white that water gets the more useful being part of a crew in a boat becomes.

- This is where that security--

- We need to keep reminding our constituencies, though.

- I love that and Ashley Jenny had posted over here [in the chat window] "Written guidance that CEOs can share with our boards can be very welcome."

Yes, and you know I think that some of that guidance is coming, but also some of the words that Glenn just used I think were just beautiful too. And so a lot of that messaging is so important right now to remind people that year associations have weathered this storm before. You know, we're not meant for the sprint. We're meant for the marathon. "So well said," Kathy said. Thank you, Glenn.

Glenn, you know we're at the end of our hour and I know that people are going to want to know how to reach you, the best way to reach you. What's the best way for people to connect with you after this interview?

- They can send a message to [info@tecker.com](mailto:info@tecker.com). Or email me directly. The email is very simple. It's [gtecker@tecker.com](mailto:gtecker@tecker.com). That I will answer. If that doesn't work then call KiKi at home.

- No, don't! Don't do that! But I will say that after this interview I will be going through, I'm going to get a transcript from it. Those of you who said that there's a lot shared here you're absolutely right. That's part of the amazing awesome experience of talking with Glenn and having this interview. I will get a transcript so that you'll be able to go through and read it for the finer points that you want to take a look at and have that posted to the AssociationChat.com website. There will also be a link available over since I know a few people over at the tecker.com website. So you can check that out there too. And look for that in the next couple of days. Give me a couple of days to get that pulled together so it looks really great for you guys. Also, I'm going to email all of you with the link. So if you signed up here and you're listening to this live that means I have a way to contact you through an email address and at that email address I will be able to

send you a link to the interview and that summary with the transcript, okay. So you'll be getting access to all of that.

Glenn, I want to thank you so much for taking the time to join me today. You know, there's a lot that's been going on and as always you've provided a great amount of information and guidance that I think all of us can appreciate.

- Well, and KiKi I want to thank you and Association Chat for creating that opportunity not just for me, but for the opportunity for our community to have access to a well-curated body of information and insight.

- Oh, thank you so much. Everyone thank you. Have a wonderful rest of the week. Until next time everyone. I always say this at the end of all of my interviews, keep asking questions to learn every day. As Joseph Campbell once said, "The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek." So have a great week everyone.

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