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Learning in Your Association – Key Questions to Explore

Making formal and informal learning needs assessment part of your “organizational DNA” is only a part of creating effective learning opportunities for members and staff. It’s also critical to understand the *value proposition* your education activities offer – and then create a *learning strategy* to guide your decision-making and planning.

First, identify your learning stakeholders...they’ll likely be staff, members, potential members, sponsors, suppliers/vendors – anyone impacted in some way by your educational opportunities. Initiate conversations with these stakeholders in which you explore the questions below.

Use the concept of *Beginner’s Mind* – think about these questions from the perspective of someone who knows nothing about your educational offerings. By doing so, there will be more openness to new ideas!

Questions to ask in creating and/or redefining value:

- Why does the current education system exist? Should it continue? Or...why should we create one?
- Who benefits from it?
- What are its strengths and weaknesses?
- How can it be improved?
- Who can help improve it?

Reach consensus on the answers to these questions, then combine with your needs assessment data and look at the entire organization. Where can learning contribute to organizational goals? What value-add could learning offer? The result becomes a *value proposition* for learning – a tool you can use in developing and marketing your learning opportunities.

Questions to ask in developing your learning strategy:

Once you know your value proposition, continue the stakeholder conversations and use the answers to develop a learning strategy for your association. Consider these questions for staff learning, too!

- What types of education would be most beneficial to your members?
- How are members addressing their learning needs now? What are their plans for learning in the future?
- What capabilities does your association have for fully satisfying member education needs? What are you missing? How might you get those capabilities?
- What resources are available? What do you need to acquire? How might you acquire those resources?

Build your education program using this strategy, and evaluate all new ideas against it.

For more information about developing value proposition and strategy for association learning, contact Kathleen M. Edwards, CAE, president & chief navigator, at 410-939-1125 or via e-mail at kedwards@learningevangelist.com

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