

Leadership Assessment: Supporting Non-Dues Revenue Generation

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Lack of internal interest is the top challenge facing association revenue producers, according to the 2024 Non-Dues Revenue Performance Study published by Professionals for Association Revenue (PAR). So how can association leadership show their support for programs that garner revenue to sustain the organization?

Members of PAR recently convened to discuss potential solutions to this issue. The consensus opinion involved the CEO taking the lead in showcasing their support for non-dues revenue efforts with their words and actions.

As an association CEO, you are uniquely positioned to advocate for your programs that sustain the mission and generate revenue. Use this step-by-step self-assessment to determine your readiness to support these efforts:

1) Be intentional and specific when speaking about non-dues revenue efforts.

As the CEO, you know that you can easily talk in generalities about your interest in increasing non-dues revenue. While positive, this approach is unlikely to move the needle. Instead, talk in specifics about the project with the potential to generate revenue. Provide details on the project, the resources required, expected timeframes and results, and how you will ensure that others on the leadership team and staff are supportive.

Use this space to note the key points that you will share.

Also consider:

- Have I identified a specific project with revenue-generating potential?
- Can I clearly articulate the details of this project?

2) Allocate the needed budget.

In seeking to increase non-dues revenue, funds will be required to establish or improve the program, to market or sell to the right audience, and to determine if current staff has the needed skills.

Outline below the budget allocations for specific line items over the term of the project:

Also consider:

- Have I determined the resources required for this project?
- Have we evaluated budget needs throughout the organization to ensure project success?

3) Address staffing needs.

Determine whether new staff should be hired, if current staff have the required skills and can allocate the time, and whether outside help is needed. Consider sales and marketing, operations, and program development, along with other departments. Reinforce the importance of the non-dues revenue project when communicating with the leadership team and other staff.

Note key strengths and opportunities related to staffing:

Also consider:

- Have I developed a plan to ensure leadership team support?
- Have I considered how to gain staff buy-in for this project?
- Can I articulate the benefits of this project to leadership and staff?

4) Incorporate the project in important association activities.

In demonstrating support and buy-in, include the project in the strategic plan (along with strategic plan updates), operational plans, board reports, and performance appraisals. When a project is consistently incorporated in important activities, it serves as evidence of your commitment.

Note the important activities to include and how you will showcase your support:

Also consider:

- Have I included this project in the organization's strategic plan?
- Is the project reflected in our strategic plan updates?
- Have I incorporated the project into our operational plans?
- Is the project consistently mentioned in board reports?
- Have I included project-related goals in relevant performance appraisals?

5) Establish KPIs and accountability measures.

Implement specific key performance indicators (KPIs) to track project status. Consider which KPIs to include and how they will link back to the above factors (e.g., budget, staffing, activities). Additionally, what accountability measures will you implement or reinforce to enhance the likelihood of success?

Consider appropriate metrics or KPIs to assess progress:

Also consider:

- Have I identified specific KPIs to track the project's status and success?
- Do these KPIs cover financial aspects (e.g., revenue generated, ROI)?
- Are there KPIs measuring the project's impact on membership or engagement?
- Do the KPIs link back to the project's goals and strategic objectives?

6) Identify other ways that you and your leadership team can demonstrate support.

In developing association non-dues revenue programs, there are often situations that arise that hinder the project or offer new opportunities. These could include providing introductions, ensuring that other staff support the project, or participating in meetings internally and outside the organization advocating for this effort.

Note what more can be done in this section:

Also consider:

- Am I confident that my approach will effectively "move the needle" on non-dues revenue?
- Have I moved beyond general statements of interest to a concrete, actionable plan?
- Does my level of project integration demonstrate genuine commitment to its success?

Summary

Building non-dues revenue programs requires your support to be successful. Your buy-in and actions to help overcome challenges will make a major impact. Consider the steps above, evaluate where you and your team stand, and implement the right actions to ensure non-dues revenue success.

[Flax Associates](https://www.flaxassociates.com) helps associations and nonprofits establish income-generating programs. If you'd like to discuss how you and your leadership team can enhance your revenue potential, please reach out to Lewis by email (lewis@flaxassociates.com) and list "Leadership Assessment" in the subject line. PAR members are eligible to receive a complimentary one-hour session to discuss this assessment.