

76 Membership-Driven Programs and Services Ideas

1. **Membership Campaign:** Recruit ten to twenty volunteers, current members of the business association that are committed to its success, and launch a campaign through personal contact and the media to recruit new members to the association.
2. **Thank You Drive:** Recruit ten to twenty volunteers, along with the staff of the business association, to personally visit every member of the association to say “thank you” for their ongoing support. Each member should receive an inexpensive but appropriate thank you gift, as well as some information on the association’s programs and services. This effort will add revenue to the association by increasing its member retention rate and creating visibility within the community.
3. **Testimonial Campaign:** Ask the local newspaper to either donate or provide at a low cost some advertising space for testimonials about the business association. These testimonials should come from members of the association that are committed to its success. They should communicate to potential members and the community in their own words the importance of the association and its programs.
4. **Logo Visibility:** Ask your members to display the logo of the business association in their regular advertisements in the mass media. For instance, if a retail store runs an advertisement in the newspaper offering a discount on clothing, ask the store manager to put the business association logo at the bottom of the advertisement announcing, “This store is a member of the XYZ business association”.
5. **Passport to Progress:** Create an inexpensive booklet listing the date, time, and type of each business association event. Distribute this booklet to all members along with instructions that if they get the passport “stamped” by the association staff upon their attendance at five or more of the events, they will qualify for a drawing at the end of the year at which a significant prize (electronics, gift cards, cash, etc.) will be awarded. They can only qualify if they participate in the required number of events. This will increase participation, which will in turn increase member retention.
6. **Business After Hours:** Charge a nominal fee for members to attend a Business After Hours networking event. This event can be held at a business that “sponsors” it by covering the costs. This is advertising for the business because it raises the visibility of that particular business and provides access to more customers for the business. The business association benefits because it generates additional revenue, hosts a high-profile event, and provides a way for members to interact. Members benefit by networking with each other and with special invited guests with the goal of gaining additional business opportunities.
7. **Business to Business Breakfasts/Luncheons:** Obtain a corporate sponsor to pay the costs of the event and charge a nominal fee to members that attend. The breakfast or luncheon (depending on what is more desirable for the members) can feature a

special guest speaker that will ensure good attendance (e.g. representative of an international donor organization, a government official, etc.).

Publications:

8. **Membership Directory:** The membership directory is one of the most important publications distributed by business associations. The cost of the directory can be offset by advertising revenue, but the association can actually make money on the publication by contracting with an advertising/printing company that will sell all the advertising, collect all the funds, print the directories, and provide them to the association for distribution to its members. Not only does the association obtain a four-color directory for no charge, but also the royalty fees from the publication can amount to thousands of dollars in income.
9. **Trade/Investment Publications:** Trade/investment publications are becoming increasingly important to business associations that seek to attract national and international investment opportunities for their members. While advertising sales are not generally desirable in these publications, many large companies like to sponsor them in order to gain visibility in the global marketplace. With two to three corporate sponsors, the publication can be produced professionally, at a profit for the association, and be distributed to potential investors.
10. **City/Regional Maps:** Virtually every business prospect that visits a community wants an up-to-date city or regional map. Business associations can generate income through advertising sales and at the same time produce a high-quality product. In addition, once the maps are printed, the association can sell them for a small fee to business prospects, tourists, etc.
11. **Local Government Handbook:** Many associations around the world are producing local government handbooks that provide information on elected officials, parties, and issues. Typically, medium and large companies will fund such a publication because they want access to the information. The business association's role can be to compile the information and generate sponsorships for the publication. Once published, the handbook provides another reason for companies to join the association.
12. **Guide for Entrepreneurs:** A guide for entrepreneurs can outline business registration procedures, licensing procedures, financing alternatives, and other useful information. Banks and other financing entities will usually fund such publications because they reach potential customers. A business association can generate revenue by soliciting sponsorship of the guide.

Technology:

13. **Website Development:** Business associations around the world are finding website development as a consistent source of additional revenue. In collaboration with an internet service provider, business associations can contract with member



companies to design their web pages. Not only can associations earn additional revenue from the companies themselves, but also from collaborative agreements with internet service providers that want to have access to potential new customers.

14. **E-Commerce Site:** Associations are beginning to tap the revenue potential of e-commerce sites. By collaborating with one or a group of technology companies, associations can provide companies with the ability to develop their own e-commerce sites. Rather than developing the sites, the business associations receive a percentage of revenue from every site developed by the technology companies involved in the project. This provides additional customers for the web design companies and additional revenue for the associations.
15. **Web-Based Advertising:** Business associations are natural conduits for web-based advertising, whether the associations sell the advertising themselves and use the profit to fund other activities, or whether they contract with advertising partners to sell the advertising and provide them with a percentage of the profit.
16. **Electronic Newsletter/Magazine:** Digital information represents increased revenue opportunities for business associations. Electronic newsletters and magazines are desired by members and can generate revenue through advertising, subscriptions, and sponsorships.
17. **On-Line Training:** Business associations that possess the appropriate technology can provide online training through sponsorships or subscriptions. This training raises the profile of the association as well as provides additional revenue.
18. **E-Networking:** A majority of business association members list access to customers as their number one expectation. With this in mind, business associations can provide e-networking opportunities. One potential e-networking idea is to develop a small and medium-sized best practices portal in which subject matter experts can communicate with each other, share offers, take advantage of training and financing resources, and have access to outsourcing offers provided by larger companies. Business associations can gain additional revenue by offering this service on a subscription basis.
19. **Community Marketing Video:** Potential business partners, investors, and donors want access to as much information on communities as possible. Business associations, by collaborating with one or a group of PR agencies, can develop a community video that is sponsored by major companies. These items can then be sold to potential investors, business prospects, salespersons, etc.
20. **Legislative Information Network:** By providing real-time information via the internet or e-mail, business associations can gain additional revenue. Online legislative programs can provide information on issues, candidates, and parties as well as statistics, voting records, etc. Business associations can offer this information on a subscription basis and provide a password-protected environment in which it can be retrieved. Also, business associations can customize information for a higher fee to members who want specific information on one or a group of issues.

21. **Social Media Ad:** Business associations can purchase social media ads to provide information on the community, the association, upcoming events, etc. Also, the ads can be sponsored by a company or group of companies. Under this scenario, viewers would see a tag and a link to the sponsor.

Printing/Back Office:

22. **Contract Mail Service:** Business associations can contract with companies to prepare and process their UPS, Federal Express, and other shipping. Associations can charge a 5% commission on top of the shipping costs in order to generate revenue.
23. **Outsourcing Contract:** Business associations can benefit financially from outsourcing in a variety of ways. One way is for associations to do contract bookkeeping for small enterprises that do not have the ability to do this on their own. Another outsourcing opportunity is website design, associations can provide a fee to members and non-members that do not have the capacity to design a webpage on their own.
24. **Equipment Rental:** Associations can invest in equipment such as video projectors, overhead projectors, speakers, flip charts, etc., and rent them to companies and organizations that do not have the funds to purchase the equipment. This provides an ongoing source of revenue and helps to offset the cost of the investment in equipment.
25. **Mailing Lists:** For a fee, associations can provide their mailing list on mailing labels or list forms to organizations, international donors, or companies. This service is especially attractive to retail merchants that want to publicize offers. This service can also be valuable to academicians and other researchers alike who are interested in carrying out public or academic research.

Consulting Services:

26. **Business Development Consulting:** Business associations around the world have found that business consulting is a consistent source of revenue. This may take the form of financial consulting, marketing assistance, sales training, or customer service support.
27. **Entrepreneurial Assistance:** This assistance can come in the form of financial consulting, development of business plans, networking support, and assistance in gaining appropriate licenses and permits to start a business. This has become a basic source of revenue for many business associations.
28. **Labor Negotiations:** Some business associations, especially those that focus on sector-specific activities, provide mediation services between member companies and representatives of labor unions. This is typically done on a contract basis.
29. **Arbitration Services:** In recent years, many business associations have begun to offer arbitration services in order to mediate disputes between member companies. Arbitration is cheaper and faster than court proceedings and can provide significant revenue to business associations that invest in the training of certified arbiters.

30. **Quality Standards:** Business associations are increasingly interested in quality standards assessment and training. This may encompass ISO certification, total quality management integration, leadership development, or a myriad of other services. This is best done on a contract basis with member and non-member companies. As with all services, members should receive a significant discount as a reward for their loyalty to the association.
31. **Management Audits:** Some business associations are now contracting with companies to conduct management audits on a fee-for-service basis. This requires associations to invest time and money in the certification of expert auditors, and it also requires significant marketing.
32. **Legal Services:** Some business associations are now offering legal consulting as part of their core services. On a contract basis, consulting on legal issues can generate an impressive amount of revenue for associations.
33. **Market Research:** Business associations are natural conduits for market research as they typically are unbiased in their approach and have the resources to collect real-time information. Companies, especially those launching a new product or service, are willing to pay a significant fee for professional market research to augment their own in-house efforts.

Events:

34. **Top Company Event:** A Top Company event (an event that honors top-performing companies) not only creates visibility for business associations but can also create revenue. Corporate sponsors can be solicited to offset expenses, and additional revenue can be generated by ticket sales and publications.
35. **Business Person of the Year Banquet:** Business Person of the Year Banquets not only increases the visibility of business associations but also create loyalty. Through solicitation of corporate sponsors, ticket sales, and publication sales, associations can raise significant revenue.
36. **Entrepreneurial Spirit Banquet:** A banquet honoring entrepreneurs will typically attract significant financial support from corporations, the government, and the donor community. The banquet could honor the top entrepreneurs in a region, feature a keynote speaker, and highlight the top ten entrepreneurial ideas for consideration by financial institutions and investors.
37. **Excellence in Education Luncheon:** Honoring outstanding educators and top students is an effective way for business associations to gain both visibility and revenue. Corporations are typically enthusiastic about sponsoring such events, so the revenue potential is vast.
38. **Excellence in Government Luncheon:** By honoring the accomplishments of government officials and Members of Congress or City Council, business associations can achieve the dual goals of highlighting their legislative agenda and thanking



elected officials that have assisted them over the course of a year. Corporations, NGOs, and other organizations are usually good targets for sponsorship income

39. Annual Meeting (e.g. General Assembly): Many business associations have failed to tap the revenue creation potential offered by their annual meeting (or annual general assembly as it is called in some areas). Corporate sponsors are a good source of revenue for the event, as are special events linked to the event like an auction of donated prizes (such as trips, electronics, etc.) and tournaments (such as golfing, fishing, or tennis), which offer camaraderie but also, generate revenue through registration fees.
40. Sports Tournaments (e.g. football, golf, basketball, etc.): Business associations around the world are beginning to tap the potential of sponsoring sports tournaments, as they are great sources of sponsorship fees and registration income. Also, concession fees (the sale of food and drink) at these events can generate thousands of dollars in additional revenue.
41. Affinity Programs: Affinity programs are those that provide members of an association a discount or special offer because of their affiliation with the association.
42. Insurance Program: Business associations can develop an “insurance group” of small and medium-sized companies that wish to offer additional insurance coverage as an employee incentive. By contracting with an insurance company to provide a group of a certain size to purchase life, health, auto, or homeowners insurance, business associations can earn thousands of dollars in royalty fees.
43. Cellular Telephone Discount Program: Business associations can contract with a cellular telephone company to establish it as the “official” cellular provider. By doing this, the associations earn revenue from royalties based on the number of their members that subscribe to the service; members received a reduced rate by being a member of the business association, and the company gains new customers. More than one company may participate by agreeing to pay the business associations a fee for each of their members that register for service.
44. Internet Service Discount Program: Using the same scenario as with cellular telephone providers, business associations can contract with one or a number of internet service providers and receive a fee for each association member that registers a new account.
45. Community Card: The community card is created in conjunction with local merchants, and it encourages people to shop locally. Business associations provide members with a discount card that can be used at participating merchants for reduced prices on one or a number of items. The merchants typically pay the associations a fee to be part of the program as it increases their number of potential customers. The community card is a free service the associations can provide to their members, which ultimately creates additional membership revenue.
46. Rental Car Discount Program: Using the same scenario as with cellular telephones and internet service providers, business associations can contract with one or a number

of rental car companies to provide discounts to their members. Typically, the associations receive a fee for each member that rents a car during the period of the contract.

47. **Travel Discount Program:** Some business associations offer discount books for reduced-priced lodging, attractions, airfare, and meals. These coupon books are supported by advertising revenue, so the members of the associations can receive them free.

Agreements:

48. **Collaboration Agreements:** Business associations can collaborate with other associations, companies, NGOs, or donor organizations to sponsor events and programs. Each of the collaborative partners would have a share of the revenue generated by the program or service. This allows small associations that have low capacity to produce events and services on their own to partner with other entities and gain access to needed revenue while offering a new program or service to members.
49. **Joint Marketing Agreements:** Business associations sometimes join with companies to jointly market products and services. For instance, associations may join with a shipping provider such as UPS to jointly market its discount shipping service during the Christmas holidays. Typically, companies are willing to pay a joint marketing fee to business associations in order to gain access to customers.
50. **Licensing Agreements:** A growing number of business associations are joining companies to create a product or service that can generate revenue through licensing fees. For instance, an association in Indonesia contracted with an information technology company to create membership development software for membership-based organizations. The association received a licensing fee for each product sold. The company benefited by becoming identified with this successful product, and its sales increased dramatically.

Merchandise:

51. **Logo Merchandise:** Some business associations, especially those with a high profile or a definable logo, have created merchandise that features their logo. This merchandise can include shirts, caps, coffee mugs, key chains, ink pens, and any other item that can be sold to the public.
52. **Community Collectibles:** In communities where unique products are produced (such as porcelain, pottery, etc.) business associations can create revenue by purchasing these products wholesale and selling them to the general public at retail prices. Another possible scenario is for business associations to contract with the manufacturers to promote their goods. Manufacturers are usually willing to pay a commission to the associations for their assistance in marketing their merchandise.

53. Photographs/Prints: Photographs and prints have become big business, and visitors are especially interested in purchasing unique pictures of a city or region. For a relatively low investment, business associations can produce professional photographs and prints for sale to the public.

Services:

54. Community Guides: Community guides are consistent sources of additional income. They are usually created in conjunction with an advertising/printing partner that agrees to sell the advertising, produce the guides, and provide final copies of the guide and a royalty fee to the business associations. The associations control the editorial content of the guide and have input into the design, but a majority of the work is done by the advertising/printing partner which keeps up to 80% of the advertising revenue.

55. Translation Services: Business associations can offer translation services to individuals and companies that wish to do business in a particular city or region. For a fee, Chamber staff or contractors can translate official documents, letters, and other information.

56. Interpretation Services: Business associations can offer interpretation services to individuals and companies that wish to do business in a particular city or region. For a fee, Chamber staff or contractors can interpret at meetings with clients, as well as assist in logistical details of trips and transactions.

Community Events:

57. Festivals: Every community has cultural, historical, and artistic uniqueness that can be translated into the initiation of a festival. Festivals hold great opportunities for business associations to generate additional revenue. Associations can participate in festivals that already exist by selling merchandise produced by their members, local or regional treats, etc. Associations can also initiate new festivals and promote them in the regional, national, and international markets. Some organizations around the world generate tens of thousands of dollars from festivals, though they take a great deal of coordination and expertise.

58. Silent Auctions: A silent auction is an event, usually attached to a reception, annual meeting, or other major function, where a business association collects donated items on which participants can bid. Rather than a traditional auction, participants are provided the opportunity to bid “silently” by writing their bids on a piece of paper. At various times throughout the event, bidders check the paper in front of their desired item to see if anyone has bid higher than them. If this is the case, they can increase the bid until such time as the auction is declared over. At that time, the person holding the highest bid gets the item. Business associations can make thousands of dollars on silent auctions by collecting donated prizes and obtaining



sponsors for the event. By doing this, it ensures that all the proceeds from the bids will go to the association.

59. **Marathons/Sports Events:** Marathons and other sporting events are good sources of revenue. Because people are becoming more sports conscious, events that include competition create an opportunity for business associations to create revenue. While marathons are on the upswing, other competitions such as football tournaments, basketball competitions, and even track and field events are increasing in importance. By utilizing corporate sponsors and charging entry fees, business associations can benefit from the competitive spirit of the community.
60. **Raffles/Drawings:** While typically not a stand-alone activity, raffles and drawings can be used effectively in conjunction with other events. Business associations often get a major prize donated by a member company and they sell raffle tickets to individuals who hope to win. The raffle prize may be a vacation, two weeks at a mountain house, a flat-screen television, or even an automobile! The more desirable the potential prize, the more revenue that can be raised through the raffle.
61. **Galas:** Increasingly, the members of business associations like to get dressed up and attend a party honoring a community event, patron, political figure, or significant achievement. Business associations create revenue by coordinating these events, soliciting sponsors, and selling tickets for participation. Some associations have sponsored New Year's Eve events, while others have focused on specific business events such as an annual meeting or a businessperson's ball.
62. **Art in the Park:** Associations are now beginning to consider arts and cultural events when developing their strategies for creating additional revenue. Art in the Park is an event at which local artisans (painters, craftsmen, sculptors, etc.) display their works for sale in an outdoor setting. Not only does this event usually draw large crowds, but also business associations can make money by charging participation fees to the artists or contracting with them for a percentage of sales. The event also provides increased visibility to the associations.
63. **Historical Tours:** For cities with a great deal of historical significance, business associations can unearth a treasure trove of potential revenue by training volunteers to conduct historical tours. In many cases, the volunteers dress in historic costumes and provide tourists with a unique historical experience. Tourists typically will pay handsomely for this type of tour, and business associations can either conduct them on their own or collaborate with one or more tour operators on a royalty basis. In the case of the latter scenario, the associations would agree to market the historical tours and the collaborating companies would pay either a percentage fee or a participation fee to the associations.
64. **Arts for All:** Since art is important to people of all ages, an Arts for All celebration can bring a community together while creating revenue for the associations that coordinate the activity. Arts for All is a "festival" that promotes all types of art (theatre, sculpting, painting, crafts, cinematography, etc.) and puts it on display for

visitors. While the event requires broad-based community support and collaboration with local government, it is very attractive to corporate sponsors, visitors, and artisans.

65. **Children's/Youth Day:** Children's/Youth Day is a day designed for the enjoyment of young people from babies to teenagers. Art and cultural events, sports, food, music, and dancing can all be part of this day that celebrates the joy of youth. Since young people are potential customers, and their parents already are, corporate sponsors that are interested in brand identity are natural sponsors. Also, this event produces very high visibility for the sponsoring association(s).
66. **Theatre Night:** Business associations can contract with a particular stage theatre or acting company to do a special performance for members and potential members of the associations. Companies view this event as a good sponsorship opportunity since it usually draws the leaders of a community. Business associations generate revenue through both ticket sales and sponsorships while creating a forum for the distribution of information on the associations' programs and services.

Others:

67. **Community Leadership Program:** Community leadership programs are not only good sources of potential revenue for business associations but also can greatly enhance the leadership dynamics of communities. The program typically runs on one-year cycles and includes a class of ten to twenty potential leaders that are nominated and selected based on the merits of their applications. Business associations gain revenue through tuition, corporate sponsorships of the program or of individual sessions, as well as through potential donor community participation.
68. **Service Corps of Retired Executives:** This program, known as SCORE in much of the world, partners retired business executives with entrepreneurs and small business owners in an effort to provide consultation and support. Business associations can gain revenue from this program by charging a small fee for service to companies that wish to take advantage of the volunteer experts' services.
69. **Business Mentor Program:** The business mentor program is a way for business associations to provide an important service and also create revenue. Business mentors are recruited from a variety of professions and assigned to individuals or small companies that need specific support or advice. Corporate sponsors typically embrace this program due to its focus on business.
70. **Adopt-A-School Program:** This program is a way to provide schools with needed equipment and materials and at the same time generate revenue for business associations. Adopt-A-School is a program where local businesses and individuals are encouraged to donate funds, equipment, and volunteers to schools in order to enhance the quality of life for students. Revenue for business associations is generated through sponsorship of the program by corporations and private individuals.

71. **Adopt-A-Teacher Program:** This is a similar program to Adopt-A-School, except it focuses on providing classroom supplies to individual teachers. The administration of this program is complex, but business associations can benefit from its community focus and from revenue provided by corporate sponsors and individuals.
72. **Adopt-A-Highway Program:** The Adopt-A-Highway program is usually done in conjunction with a municipal or regional authority that contracts with a business association to administer it. The association recruits volunteers to provide supplies (trash bags, protective vests, etc.) and assigns the volunteers to specific roads or streets. In turn, the municipal or county authority pays a fee to the association for this service.
73. **Corporate Social Responsibility Program:** Due to recent events around the world, Corporate Social Responsibility is becoming an increasingly important topic. Business associations can benefit by coordinating conferences and providing information on this topic. Corporations are keen to support such efforts, and significant funding can be raised by business associations that become well-versed on the topic and have the capacity to carry forward the initiative.
74. **Corporate Governance Program:** Corporate governance continues to be an important issue, and donor organizations continue to pour money into business associations that promote corporate governance programs.
75. **Speaker/Lecture Series:** Business associations can develop a lecture series featuring noted speakers on a variety of issues. Each event can be sponsored by a company or group of companies and a small admission fee can also be charged. In addition to generating revenue, these events establish business associations as the conduit for discussion and debate on significant issues.
76. **Tourism Guides Program:** Business associations can recruit and train tourism guides that are then used by local tour operators. Tour operators can be charged a fee for each guide used, or a higher registration fee that allows them to be part of the program and use as many guides as they wish throughout the year.