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# Tradeshow, Events and Meetings, Oh My!

BY DAVID ELLIS, CAE



**DID YOU KNOW** GSAE offers at least 25 hours of in-person Certified Association Executive (CAE) continuing education annually? Our Annual Meeting, five luncheons, at least two workshops and half a dozen Shared Interest Group (SIG) meetings, plus our CAE Study Group, provides multiple opportunities for our members to gather and learn together. Add in our live and recorded webinar schedule, our co-sponsorship of FSAE's Qualified Association Specialist (QAS) program, plus the Leadership Academy offered every two years, and you can see our commitment to helping members be better at their jobs.

Based on the feedback from our Leadership Retreat last August, we've also introduced the following initiatives in our professional development:

- **Marketing**—Staff is creating short, sweet and video-laden messages using GSAEtv episodes, speaker videos and, soon, GSAE member-produced content.
- **Experimenting**—The Millennial Infusion Program, Set GSAE Afire and Wisdom While You Walk are all examples of how GSAE continues to model innovative programs for you all to adopt and adapt for your organization.
- **Crowdsourcing**—We are soliciting opinions and creating action based on the answers we receive. We asked our emerging professionals which program they wanted to see from Beth Brooks, CAE in April. Where possible, we will continue to gather real-time feedback for programs. The committee also requested deconstructing certain association activities and sharing that information from the point of view of a vendor, planner, speaker or attendee. The results include the Green Meeting

Safari during Annual Meeting and the Mock Site Visit during the Tradeshow.

We are working to create more meeting connection points for GSAE members. The Supplier Council met in February and April and is hard at work creating tradeshow options and other opportunities to collaborate with their association executive colleagues. We appreciate the leadership shown by our suppliers to find new ways to connect in meaningful ways with potential and existing clients. Watch for us to explore more ways to establish our supplier members as content experts and resources to help association professionals solve problems and improve their members own experiences.

We have revamped the CAE Study Group from nine sessions to three half-day sessions to better accommodate our members' busy schedules and to capitalize on the group wisdom of our facilitators. Our hope is the "seminar" format will lead to more cross-domain learning and to our participants synthesizing the information more effectively, based on the latest information we've heard about adult learning.

GSAE remains committed to putting the right people in the right room at the right time. I hope you will join us at an upcoming event and see how GSAE implements the most effective ideas from our community.

David Ellis, CAE  
Executive Vice President  
Greater Atlanta Homebuilders Association

## Save the Date for GSAE Events in 2016

To help you plan your professional development year, GSAE's current calendar of events is available below. We will offer more than **25 hours** of CAE-matched programming this year. GSAE is a Preferred CAE Provider through the CAE Commission. Our list of events is always available online at [www.gsae.org](http://www.gsae.org) (Learn/Calendar View). Various Shared Interest Group meetings and webinars will be added throughout the year.

- **JULY 13**

GSAE Summer Luncheon at The Center for Civil & Human Rights, sponsored by Jekyll Island Authority

- **SEPTEMBER 21**

GSAE Quarterly Luncheon, The Abit Massey Lecture Series at The Commerce Club Atlanta, featuring John Graham, IV, FASAE, CAE, President & CEO, ASAE: The Center for Association Leadership; sponsored by Augusta Convention & Visitors Bureau

- **NOVEMBER 16**

GSAE event at Georgia International Convention Center; sponsorship opportunities available

- **DECEMBER 14**

GSAE Holiday Luncheon, Awards Show & Silent Auction—hosting & sponsorship opportunities available

## The Power of A



### STRONGER BY ASSOCIATION

GSAE members visited Washington, D.C., March 9-10 for American Associations Day to advocate for vital association issues. Sessions featured briefs on timely issues, including the potential Department of Labor changes to overtime rules and the value of meetings, as well as a primer on getting the most out of your congressional meetings.

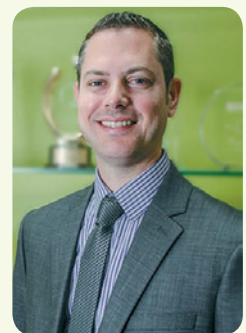


**Adam Thocher, CAE, Gabriel Eckert, FASAE, CAE, Rob Sumner, Esq., Rick Walker, Esq., Gerald Huang, Senator Perdue's office, Michael Black, Senator Isakson's office, Wendy Kavanagh, CAE**

## Gabriel Eckert, FASAE, CAE Named to ASAE's 2016 Class of Fellows

Gabriel Eckert, FASAE, CAE, Executive Director, Building Owners and Managers Association of Georgia, along with four other inspiring leaders in the association community, has been named to ASAE's 2016 Class of Fellows. The Fellows program recognizes individual accomplishments and contributions to ASAE and the association sector, and is a call to service for the profession.

The 2016 Fellows join 251 association industry professionals who have received this designation since the program's inception in 1986. Serving as role models and ambassadors for the association community, Fellows seek out opportunities to serve on boards and committees and participate as speakers, authors, reviewers, and mentors.



## GSAE Sponsorship and Hosting Opportunities

**Luncheons** are the primary venue for networking in GSAE. About 180 members generally attend each luncheon, which is preceded by a 30-minute networking reception. Your exclusive sponsorship includes an exhibit table during registration and the networking reception, 2-3 minutes of podium time, rights to leave a brochure or flyer on each seat, luncheon registration for five people, recognition in promotional materials and post-event attendee mailing labels. November and December are still available for sponsorship.

The **host property** of each luncheon will receive an exhibit table during registration and the networking reception, the opportunity to place material at each place setting, podium time, significant exposure and an attendee mailing list following the luncheon. This is a great opportunity to showcase your property! All GSAE luncheons are on Wednesdays. Available 2016 dates are: November 16 and December 14.



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## Live Webinars – Approved for 1 CAE Hour Each

**TUESDAY, JUNE 14, 2016**

**Maverick in Your Midst: How to Deal Effectively—L. Kay Wilson**

Published by Connecticut Society of Association Executives and Georgia Society of Association Executives

2-3 p.m.

\$45 for Members

Maverick personalities abound. When they are moderated mavericks, they are drivers, they get things done and they work well with others. When they are unmitigated mavericks, they can wreak havoc with boards and leadership teams. They engage in domination tactics, are pushy and take up the space and room where real dialogue ought to be. This program focuses on diffusing the domination tactics, holding mavericks accountable and conducting safe and fair discussions on important topics through facilitation skills.

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29, 2016**

**Grow Your Association Like a Billion Dollar Brand—Gerry O'Brien**

Published by Illinois Society of Association Executives and Georgia Society of Association Executives

2-3 p.m.

\$45 for Members

The best associations are adept at attracting new members and turning all of their members into raving fans. The ones who do this grow and thrive, while the ones that don't risk falling into a death spiral. Learn the five critical questions that every association needs to be asking to stay relevant in today's changing landscape. This content is perfect for association executives, decision-makers, executive level leadership, and other marketing and planning members.

*Learn more and register for live and on-demand webinars at [www.gsae.org](http://www.gsae.org) (Learn/Live Webinars).*



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**Dawn James**  
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Synthetic Turf Council

**Steve Michael**  
Senior Financial Advisor  
Marietta Wealth Management



# TRADESHOW

## Trends to Watch Closely

BY MARY LOU JAY

**TRYING TO ANTICIPATE** what you should be planning for your tradeshows a few years down the line? We asked three industry experts to share their observations on trends that could transform your meetings in the future.

### Increased Interaction through Technology

Tradeshow organizers will increasingly rely on apps rather than paper to provide attendees with necessary information. Social media will play a larger role to encourage engagement of millennial participants.

Speakers will find that at least some portion of their audiences will be using a device even as they're talking. "Whereas a more seasoned event planner might view that as being disrespectful or disengaged, some speakers today are now utilizing all of the screen capabilities that individuals have in front of them,"

said **Amy Clark**, Managing Director, Southeast, HelmsBriscoe. Clark recently attended a tech conference where one speaker even told the audience, "It's okay to keep your head down the whole time." That speaker utilized the extra screens as part of her presentation, asking participants to post photos and encouraging them to look at the websites of various platforms and programs that she was discussing.

But **Don Neal**, founder and CEO of 360 Live Media, doesn't see the greater use of technology as a positive trend. "I think the last thing people should be doing is consuming media on their phones and being immersed in technology



when they have paid to be in the company of other human beings, live, face-to-face," he said.

### New Approaches to Traffic Flow

The traditional aisles of tradeshows may be disappearing to encourage more traffic through the exhibit hall.

"We're now changing the typical floor plans in the exhibit hall to give them a more circular flow, because we have moved our functions around so that there are more events going on within the hall throughout the entire show," said **Linda Arcangeli-Story**, CMP, Manager, Meetings & Expositions, Kellen. "We're moving the meal functions into the exhibit halls or doing raffles there. My last show, not only did we do receptions in the exhibit hall, but every single break, every





single thing that we did that was a common time for the whole group, we held it in the exhibit hall.”

RFID (radio frequency identification) and beacon systems could become more popular as tradeshow organizers use them to improve traffic flow. “They are very helpful for e-mapping the experience, unclogging the choke points and providing data and feedback about traffic flow and ingress and egress,” said Neal.

“RFID allows exhibitors to know if someone they want to talk to is in their vicinity,” added Clark. “But I don’t know that the cost of such technology has come to the price point that the average member of GSAE would be able to consider it.”

On the floor itself, exhibitors may be requesting bigger booths and offer amenities like coffee and massages to create a more comfortable, welcoming space to meet with potential customers.

### Better Ways to Judge ROI

In the future, exhibitors should be using three key metrics to make their decisions about which tradeshows to attend, according to Neal. They should know the acquisition cost of a new customer, the cost of retaining current customers and the lifetime value of their customers. With that information they can look at the cost of various shows and calculate which provide the best ROI.

Neal’s company has been working with ASAE: The Center for Association Leadership and its business partner community to help them understand the questions they should ask and how to make the calculations required to get the best ROI. That will enable ASAE to effectively sell their real estate and square footage around something other than historical averages of what a square foot on a tradeshow floor cost, he said.

### Opinions Vary on Tradeshow Alternatives

Neither Neal nor Arcangeli-Story see a big increase in virtual tradeshows or in hybrid meetings that combine on-site participation and online streaming.

“I know some organizations are trying virtual tradeshows to try to save money, but I don’t really have an interest in them; I want to touch, feel, look, and I think attendees want that, too,” said Arcangeli-Story.

“We see hybrid meetings all the time, but they don’t really work,” said Neal. “If you’ve ever skyped or been on a webinar, it’s just not as good. It’s very flat. The reason is that you make a personal connection with somebody when you’re within 3 feet of them, in a way that you can never do through technology. So while there is efficiency, hybrid meetings don’t come close to live interaction.”

Since everyone today is a sophisticated media consumer, simply filming a session isn’t

enough, Neal adds. The streamed tradeshows that he has seen work well are those produced and designed much like a TV show.

Clark has a different perspective. She recently participated in a live-streamed meeting held by the Professional Conference Mangers Association. “It was pretty amazing,” she said. “If you were not able to attend, you knew that you could log-in at any point during the day and catch a session that you wanted. Plus, they engaged you throughout the whole course of the event; I would get a prompt telling me that a session was going to start. It was like I was standing in the pre-function area and somebody was ringing a bell.

“Tech solutions aren’t a substitute for in-person meetings, but a supplement and a way of engaging more individuals in the way that they prefer,” she added. “With good tech results—especially if it’s a first-time try—this can lead to greater desire to interact in person when/if the time permits.”

Hosted buyer programs have gained popularity, but there are pitfalls. “The positive for companies is that they’re getting people there that might not otherwise be able to go,” said Arcangeli-Story. “But the downside is if you’re paying for a free trip, are you really getting legitimate buyers? It’s hard to say.”

Neal favors a different approach like the one in development for a new ASAE event. Business partners and their customers co-create solutions and develop relationships based on a new value model, less transactional and more consultative.

“When they go the second day into these facilitated meetings, they already have a relationship,” said Neal. “It’s a much more human, more thoughtful way to do business. The key is to move into more of a relationship orientation rather than a transactional, one-off relationship, which is the way many tradeshows today are built.” ◀





# Take Your Event Virtual:

## Recent Trends and Strategies with Hybrid Events

BY TRACY TOMPKINS

**A VIRTUAL EVENT** is a Web-based event that replicates many aspects of a traditional location-based conference, membership meeting or trade show through webinars, webcasts, discussion groups, social networking or other online platforms. It might take place on a standalone basis, or in conjunction with a location-based event. If you're thinking about hosting a virtual event, some questions to ask include:

- What is the general type of meeting we're holding?
- What is this meeting's purpose?
- What is our desired outcome from this meeting?
- How will we measure and track progress toward our desired outcome for this meeting?
- What key business opportunities are we trying to address by potentially holding a virtual event?

Answering these questions can help ensure that a virtual event fits into your association's overall business strategy. Make sure to consider the benefits of hosting a virtual event, which are numerous:

- **Expand the reach of your event.** Reach existing or

potential members who would not otherwise attend your in-person event. Travel costs and time out of the office can make even a premier event out of reach for some members.

- **Flexibility.** Associations have more flexibility to get highly sought-after speakers if their presentation can be recorded and pushed out to attendees later.
- **Save money.** Event space, speaker fees, food and beverage, unused hotel rooms and on-site materials quickly add up for live events. Virtual events are not free, but much less expensive than a physical event. Think about it: No paying for a block of rooms that doesn't sell, ballroom space or travel for speakers.
- **Identify new non-dues revenue opportunities.** Associations can replicate many revenue sources typically found at onsite events – a bookstore or resource center, sponsorships and foundation fundraisers.
- **Reduce event planning time and post-event resource availability.** Not having to book meeting space 18 months in advance or spend time on other

facets exclusive to in-person events reduces the overall time it takes your association to plan the event. Because all sessions and presentations are automatically recorded during a virtual event, the time it takes to package content and edit it for post-event consumption is reduced.

While these benefits appeal to many associations, there are some barriers, real and perceived, to holding a virtual event:

- **Members don't want to attend virtual events.** Has your association asked them lately? If not, incorporate a few questions about the desirability and viability of members attending virtual events in your next membership survey.
- **The quality of the learning opportunity is not on par with in-person events.** This used to be a legitimate concern of organizations that wanted to host virtual events. However, broadband coverage and technology has improved so much that even a modest professional can easily and affordably equip themselves with the tools needed to enjoy a virtual event with crisp, clear audio and graphics.
- **Virtual events will cannibalize existing events and revenue streams.** Virtual events rarely replace face-to-face events because the desire for members to network and meet up with old friends remains strong. Despite the costs of travel, time off work and away from family and the long hours events sometime entail, members still rank in-person events as one of the top benefits of association membership.

### Planning a Virtual Event

When planning a virtual event for the professional development of your association members, it's imperative to have



a game plan in place before, during and after the event.

### Pre-event

Before your association even promotes a virtual professional development opportunity, set your goals and objectives for the event. What does your association want to provide its members through a virtual event? What objectives will you carry out to accomplish your goal? Once your goal is in place, build a timeline for accomplishing your contributing objectives.

Train everyone involved in producing the virtual event on how to use the technology well in advance. Speakers especially need to know how to operate your event software so they can flawlessly deliver an engaging session. Consider creating a text or video tutorial that anyone on your team can reference, and make sure the system you use works on all devices and browsers.

Determine the fee structure for your virtual professional development. Will you charge both members and non-members, or will you offer members discounted or free enrollment? Because travel isn't necessary, attendees have the luxury of waiting until the last minute to attend a virtual event. Therefore, your association can promote different registration offers right up to the day the virtual event begins.

Finally, be sure to plan for adequate promotion of your virtual professional event before it launches. In addition to standard marketing such as notices in your newsletter, magazine, website and social media pages, consider offering a video that shows off the virtual learning platform in addition to introducing the professional development topic your association will cover.

### During the event

Depending on the nature of your professional development topic,

your association could have several options for engaging attendees during your virtual event. In addition to live presentation sessions that your audience will log into, virtual learning offers the automatic ability to record what is presented for later viewing. This ability to time-shift makes virtual professional development an appealing option for professionals juggling multiple work and personal responsibilities, and is a valuable benefit your association should tout.

Virtual professional development also offers interactive features such as polling (live or over time), chat rooms or virtual lounges, games related to the topic, quizzes and social media integration. If there is an exhibitor portion of your learning event, companies can offer promotions in the form of codes redeemable online for discounts or free items, or digital badges that attendees can show off on their event or social media profiles.

### Post-event

Once your virtual professional event has ended, survey attendees about their experience the same way your association would ask them to evaluate an in-person event. You might consider using communication tools that are built in to your virtual event platform to accomplish this task.

Measure and report on every interaction, click, download, time spent, page view, sponsor lead and unique attendee recorded during your event. These quantitative metrics can all be measured with virtual events and are important for proving the return on investment of your virtual event to your staff, your board and your membership. At the same time, measure and report attendee satisfaction, level of individual engagement, social media mentions, and quality of leads that sponsors collected. Combined, these metrics allow your

## 5 KEYS for a Successful Virtual Professional Development Program

1. **Know your audience.** Develop personalized content that is useful and engaging.
2. **Design a professional** development program/event with diverse content for a variety of learning styles.
3. **Allow yourself** sufficient time for planning, plus sufficient time for new users to learn how to navigate your system.
4. **Determine your key** performance indicators and track those metrics. What measures of a successful virtual learning program are important to you and your members?
5. **Own the engagement.** Actively manage and assist your virtual students.

association to answer the question, "Should we do this again?"

### Conclusion

Virtual events can be a welcome, practical addition to your association's event lineup. Virtual events offer convenience and flexibility for speakers and attendees. They often cost less to produce than live events and the savings can be passed on to members, making it easier for them to be engaged with your association. Although there are some perceived barriers to hosting a virtual event, today's technology largely provides a quality experience even for the most basic computer setup. <

*Tracy Tompkins is a business development director for Naylor Learning Solutions. She focuses on delivering learning and event solutions ideally suited for associations. Read more best practices, news and leadership strategies from Naylor at [www.associationadviser.com](http://www.associationadviser.com).*



# EXTEND Your Conference Content

BY TRACY KING, MA, CAE

**OUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE** is our flagship education product. Naturally we want to maximize our investment and extend the reach of this great content. Unfortunately, most associations are doing it wrong.

It's time to forget about repurposing and embrace **PURPOSING**. But repurposing is efficient and responsible!

Repurposing suggests we can efficiently reuse components of education that have been delivered (past tense done) for additional meaningful learning opportunities. And we can't. Example: Captured conference recordings are not good learning opportunities. Why? Because what's been captured was designed for a learner in a live classroom learning space. Can someone be determined and dig in to learn something from a captured recording? Sure—but they will more likely Google the subject than sit through an hour long video of a slide deck. Once removed from the classroom and situated in a virtual learning environment, we have different expectations of how we want to interact with content. Captured lecture is not designed to be chunked out or accessible in online learning environments.

You can't refold a crisp origami crane into a dragonfly—it won't work. Each fold is put into place to achieve a particular design. Same with learning.

So you want an origami crane and a dragonfly. What do you do?

## Three Ideas

If your goal is to extend the learning of your conference, consider these opportunities.

**1. Hybrid Learning.** Extend the reach of your conference to new audiences—perhaps your future live attendees. Craft a meaningful experience that incorporates not only streaming of select sessions, but live chat with those speakers and some hybrid-only content. Take a look at my blog on the PCMACL hybrid experience for inspiration.

Life cycle: This is an investment in cultivating future live attendees while extending the reach of the present conference. #winwin. You may also consider extending the learning via the desktop portal you create with your vendor partner for additional content drops.

**2. Session Tools.** While attendees may request slide decks, what

they really want are tools and resources. Instead of collecting PowerPoints and Prezis, request your speakers submit a tip sheet, job aid, checklist, how-to guide, model, or process distilling their insights into a useful resource attendees can use and share.

Life cycle: While these begin as conference session handouts, they become a powerful catalyst for workplace impact. Consider the potential referrals as tools branded to your association are passed around teams because of their value. Imagine the online resource library you could build with these tools that would become indispensable to your members. Think about how you could assess downloads to determine content priorities for future education offerings.

**3. Touchpoints.** Let's free our education from product silos delivering one-offs and deploy learning that touches our members over a period of time through different channels—reaching them where they are. Allow all of your education vehicles to participate in threading your association's content priorities through multiple touchpoints

that beautifully highlight different facets of a subject through a variety of learning experiences. A few examples:

- Publish an article that leads to a live education session that's followed up by a webinar punctuated by an email sharing a valuable job aid.
- Facilitate a social media conversation about a hot topic, host a thought leader session at your conference from which you derive a handy white paper that you can then distribute through your social media channels.
- Craft an online course that pulls participants together for a live skill-building experience, followed by an eMentorship that leads to a certificate.

The possibilities are endless!

Life cycle: You decide! Your touch points on a topic could be three or could thread throughout an entire year. Extend the

learning from your conference by making it a part of a broader education delivery strategy.

### A Word about the Elephant Nearby

I don't mean to beat up on capture products. I've produced conference capture products. Members ask for them and we think we need to deliver them. We don't. This is not how we actively learn on devices. If you're going to capture content at your conference, capture it with the future mode of delivery in mind.

- Consider capturing faculty commentary on their session. Pair the recording with an article or use it to stimulate a webinar conversation.
- Consider capturing hallway insights from attendees—testimonials you can drop throughout the year to build momentum for your next event—but also a formative assessment for your association to see what is resonating with your attendees.

- Capture how-to's from your session speakers—brief clips distilled from their presentations that you can use to build a library of insights.
- TED Talk-style presentations transition well onto devices. If you're delivering them, capture them for sure.

Extending your conference content is not about repurposing what's been designed and delivered for the big gathering. It's about pausing to plan in advance how you can capitalize on the gathering to draw out content you can continue delivering all year long. <

*Tracy King, MA, CAE, is an education thought leader and learning strategist. She is an author, speaker and founder of InspirEd. For more information, visit [www.inspired-ed.com](http://www.inspired-ed.com). Reach her at [tracy@inspired-ed.com](mailto:tracy@inspired-ed.com) and follow her at @TracyInspired.*

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# Cementing the Board Chair-CEO Partnership

BY DOUG EADIE



## A Wise CEO Investment

Board-savvy CEOs well know that investing in the development of a rock-solid board chair-CEO working relationship can yield powerful organizational dividends. In fact, I would suggest that one of the preeminent priorities of a truly board-savvy CEO is to transform her board chair into a strong governing partner, a reliable ally, and when needed, an ardent change champion. The board chair makes an especially important partner for the CEO not only because of his formal authority as “CEO” of the governing board, but also the fact that board chairs are often major actors who wield tremendous influence in their communities, including in the profession or industry an association represents. I’ve seen board-savvy CEOs successfully employ four strategies in building close and productive working relationships with their board chairs:

1. Get to know the board chair really well.
2. Actively help the board chair succeed in her formal governing role.
3. Actively assist the board chair in having a richer, more satisfying experience beyond her formal leadership role.
4. And never miss an opportunity to provide the board chair with ego satisfaction, often in little but important ways.

## Getting to Know Your Board Chair

Board-savvy CEOs who excel at partnering with their board chair always, in my experience, make a concerted effort to get to know their preeminent partner in-depth as quickly as they can, often starting with the resources that the board chair brings to her leadership role, including skills, expertise, knowledge, external connections and reputation, to name some of the more important attributes. This is especially important in enlisting the board chair to provide leadership beyond merely chairing board meetings, since it would obviously be counterproductive to call on the board chair for leadership he isn’t capable of providing.

For example, a few years ago I worked with a board chair—a labor leader—who was a virtuoso at behind-the-scenes negotiation but terribly ineffectual as a public speaker—with his uninspiring monotone delivery and tendency to stumble over words. His board-savvy CEO knew enough to call on him as a partner in negotiating privately with key stakeholders, but to avoid having him represent the nonprofit as a speaker in key forums like radio talk shows.

## Helping Your Board Chair Succeed

Board chairs are unpaid volunteers in the nonprofit and public sectors, so truly board savvy CEOs are always on the lookout for nonmonetary

compensation that will not only reward the board chair for her service, but will also help to cement the board chair-CEO working relationship. The most obvious is for the CEO to go out of his way to ensure that the chair succeeds in her formal governing role.

For example, the president and CEO of a state professional association, without fail, spends at least an hour on the phone with his board chair before every meeting of the board’s governance committee, which the chair heads, going over the agenda point by point, answering any questions the chair might have, thereby making sure the chair is well prepared to lead discussion.

## Treating Your Board Chair to a Richer Governing Experience

In my experience, many less board-savvy CEOs can easily miss the opportunity to cement the relationship with their board chair by helping her enrich her professional experience beyond the strict boundaries of her formal governing role. This is an important way the CEO can say, through concrete action, “I really do care about the quality of your experience, and I’ll do what I can to make it more interesting and rewarding, beyond helping you succeed in your governing role.” Don’t doubt for a

*Continued on page 21*



# Looking Forward— The Future of Associations

BY DEAN WEST, FASAE

**IN 2016, THE** Harvard Business Review published a study of 50,000 companies over a 40-year span that identified a striking conclusion: “Companies are dying at a faster rate than ever before.” The reasons:

- Organizations face more diverse environments that are harsher, less predictable and more malleable than before.
- Technology increased the pace and impact of change.
- Businesses (and people) are more interconnected than before.

Recently, Association Laboratory concluded Looking Forward 2016, the company’s annual environmental study of the association environment. Association leaders were asked to identify the most significant issues facing their members and the likely impact of these issues on association strategy.

## Harsher Climate

Like the Harvard Business Review study, nearly 300 association leaders identified substantial challenges facing their members. Respondents identified increasing pessimism about the economy. In addition, respondents were concerned about the impact of the federal government, of mergers and acquisitions and uncertainty on a global scale, and of changes in the ability of organizations to operate across international borders.

The federal government plays a critical role in establishing the ground rules for industries

and professions. Particularly for professional societies, the federal government is a source of subject matter experts, members and conference attendees.

In Looking Forward 2016, 44 percent of associations noted changes in federal laws and regulations as one of their top government concerns, followed by increased federal regulatory costs (35 percent).

## Technology

This year’s study of association leaders also echoed the Harvard Business Review’s conclusions on the impact of technology. Associations are facing significant technological issues, as identified by CEOs responding to our survey.

In 2016, ensuring the privacy and security of data and pressures on technology infrastructure were survey options for the first time. Already, more than 3 out of 10 respondents believe these are substantial issues facing their members. Managing the volume of information members receive remained the top concern, with 55 percent of association CEOs naming it as a top driver in decision-making.

## Interconnectedness

The ability of people and organizations to connect creates both opportunities and challenges for members. In particular, Association Laboratory concluded that the ability to connect impacts associations

because people and companies can compare jobs, salaries and other information in a way that was not previously possible.

In Looking Forward 2016, the two most significant workforce concerns of association CEOs are recruiting and retaining qualified staff (39 percent) and managing a multigenerational workforce (30 percent).

## Impact on Association Strategy

The study asked leaders how the anticipated forces impacting members would affect their association’s strategy. Looking Forward 2016 identified substantial concerns among association leaders regarding key association strategies.

Three out of four association CEOs (74 percent) are somewhat or very concerned about their members’ commitment of time and money to the association.

Time and money are the building blocks of engagement. If members are unwilling to devote time and financial resources to the association, successfully achieving sustainable growth becomes much more difficult.

In addition, competition is increasingly of concern. Nearly seven in 10 respondents were concerned about competition.

Sixty-eight percent of respondents are concerned about competition from other associations, and 64 percent of respondents are concerned about competition

from for-profit organizations. These competitive pressures influence key initiatives.

Seventy percent of respondents believe it will be more difficult to make their voice heard among competing groups. This has critical implications for associations active in government advocacy.

Finally, association leaders are concerned about the impact of the changing business environment on key revenue strategies. More than half of the CEOs surveyed noted they are either somewhat or very concerned about future negative impacts on sponsorships, meeting attendance, retention, acquisition and publications revenue.

### Solutions?

Based on Association Laboratory's work with various associations and additional industry research, we identified three essential strategic priorities for associations to help deal with the changing business environment.

#### 1. Future-Focused Knowledge:

The less you know about the future, the more difficult it is to adapt to the future. Associations need to improve their processes for identifying and providing information about future trends. Only by understanding the environment within which members will operate can association leaders design strategies to help their members succeed.

#### 2. Board-Staff Partnerships:

Associations need to improve the ability of volunteer leaders and executive staff to make sound decisions. Associations waste too much time managing the governing process. A leadership team that works effectively and that is held accountable is essential to success.

#### 3. Customized Engagement

**Models:** Associations need to identify their primary target audience, prioritize essential benefits, and then customize

how they configure and price those benefits. Only by providing customized engagement models can associations differentiate themselves from the competition.

Associations are faced with a challenging environment, yet many are successfully addressing these challenges and creating innovative solutions for their members. Through their efforts, these association leaders are truly transforming their organizations and creating the next generation of association business models. ◀

*Dean West, FASAE, is president of Association Laboratory. Reach him at [dwest@associationlaboratory.com](mailto:dwest@associationlaboratory.com) or (312) 244-2626.*

### Looking Forward 2016

Read the full version of Association Laboratory's Looking Forward 2016 white paper at [associationlaboratory.com/pdf/Looking\\_Foward\\_2016.pdf](http://associationlaboratory.com/pdf/Looking_Foward_2016.pdf) or log into [www.gsae.org](http://www.gsae.org) and click on industry studies.

*Continued from page 19*

minute that such attentiveness can be a powerful relationship builder.

For example, a tremendously board-savvy public school superintendent I was working with, knowing that her board chair was very interested in climbing the volunteer ladder in the state school boards association and eventually in the national association, went way out of her way to help her chair realize this professional vision. For one thing, she spent a half-day with her chair one Saturday, helping her map out a strategy for rising through the volunteer ranks, including volunteering to serve on ad hoc committees and task forces. The superintendent even put together a proposal for she and her board chair to present a workshop at the next state association conference,

highlighting the governance improvements that had been implemented on the chair's watch. Not only was her chair touched by the superintendent's caring so deeply about his professional aspirations, the opportunity to work closely together in planning and presenting the workshop further solidified the relationship.

### Providing Your Board Chair with Ego Satisfaction

Board chairs are typically blessed with robust egos; that's one of the reasons they've become their boards' leader. Board-savvy CEOs know that a fairly simple, inexpensive way to strengthen their relationship with the chair is to capitalize on opportunities to provide the chair with ego satisfaction. There are myriad

small, less elaborate ways that CEOs can attend to their chair's ego needs if they're board-savvy enough to pay attention. To take some common examples: invite the board chair to sit in on a meeting with a key stakeholder or to participate in a radio talk show; recognize the chair for her service in one of your publications; make sure the chair is provided with an important speaking opportunity at your annual conference. ◀

*This article draws on Doug Eadie's newest book, *The Board-Savvy CEO* ([www.theboardsavvyceo.com](http://www.theboardsavvyceo.com)). To reach Doug, email him at [Doug@DougEadie.com](mailto:Doug@DougEadie.com) or call (800) 209-7652. GSAE members may purchase *The Board-Savvy CEO* at a 20 percent discount by clicking on [www.theboardsavvyceo.com](http://www.theboardsavvyceo.com) and using the discount code GSAE.*



Intern **Parker Williams** with  
**Angela Holland, CAE** (seated)  
and **Jennie Nesspor, CAE**  
of the Georgia Association  
of Convenience Stores.

# GSAE Internship Program: An Eye-Opening Experience



## THE ASSOCIATION'S PERSPECTIVE

**BY JENNIE NESSPOR, CAE**  
**MANAGER, EVENTS AND ADMINISTRATION, GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF CONVENIENCE STORES**

**THE GEORGIA ASSOCIATION** of Convenience Stores (GACS) was honored to receive GSAE's 2015 internship grant. As our president of 29 years prepared to retire, and our vice president was readying herself to move into the role at the end of the year, it was clear that an intern would be a welcome asset during this season of transition.

Working in a small staff environment, this was my first supervisory role (and our first intern) at GACS. Parker Williams came highly recommended to us from the House of Representatives office. As a student at Georgia State University, Parker had a wide array of previous experience, a complement to the association industry that manages a variety of tasks. His previous position at the Capitol was an added asset to GACS, with our major focus on legislative issues.

We welcomed Parker to GACS Headquarters on October 16, 2015. At that point, we were a month away from our largest event – the

tradeshow. Parker jumped in feet first, assisting with show management. It was important to give Parker ownership of projects so he could see the process from start to finish while learning how to troubleshoot issues along the way. We tasked Parker with managing legislative invitations and registrations to the show, along with vendor registration. Event registration was a new experience for Parker, providing a learning opportunity while allowing him to interact with our members. In addition to his role during tradeshow preparations and execution, he also assisted with other event registration and management, database management and video creation.

Parker's knowledge of technology was a welcome addition to the skill set he brought to GACS. He created a brand new membership video for our website, which had been in desperate need of updating.

Board members had decided to take a tour of the state to

view and eventually showcase new offerings of our members. To make the trip as smooth as possible, we needed to provide a plan that included the best driving routes, hotel information and other pertinent details. Parker was familiar with a website that would plot the stops in an easy to read, streamlined manner and was able to complete the work much more efficiently. He was then tasked with editing footage from the trip to create a presentable video for our summer convention. Parker's previous experience in the film industry provided him with a vast education of video editing and provided a unique opportunity to combine past knowledge and new skills.

GACS appreciates the opportunity to share association knowledge and experience with a potential industry member. Thank you to GSAE and the GSAE Foundation for providing such an incredible opportunity to your members!

## THE INTERN'S PERSPECTIVE

BY PARKER WILLIAMS, INTERN, GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF CONVENIENCE STORES

I HAD THE pleasure of working as an intern for the Georgia Association of Convenience Stores (GACS) this past fall/winter. Before my time with GACS, associations were completely foreign to me. Perhaps the greatest thing I discovered was the scope of impact associations can have.

One of my first tasks was to send correspondence to each legislator in the state, many of whom had longstanding relationships with GACS. The depth and breadth of legislative rapport was beyond anything I had previously experienced. Shortly after that, I was asked to organize and integrate new members into our tracking programs, which helped me gain an understanding of just how large and important GACS is.

Interning in a small staff organization opened my eyes to how difficult—and rewarding—these jobs can be. I am deeply impressed

by Angela and Jennie's ability to manage such a massive and diverse group day-to-day, all while growing membership, encouraging industry partnerships and expanding legislative and regulatory influence to the benefit of all parties involved.

Then came "The Show."

The annual fall trade show was a more complex undertaking than I could have imagined just one year ago. Months of hard work and planning manifested in a bricolage of infinite moving parts, somehow coming together to create one seamless whole. It was an incredible event; being part of the planning and execution was both a source of pride and, upon realizing how small my role really was, humility.

I am proud to have been able to use my own skills to help the association, from editing videos for distribution and consolidating

daunting amounts of information into usable and manageable data, to organizing years of publications and even researching and creating an industry resource myself.

Overall, the greatest takeaway I can share is that associations (and GACS, in particular) provide so much more for their members than I ever expected, and it is abundantly clear that they are worth the cost of membership, tenfold. I thoroughly enjoyed my time at GACS, and I look forward to interacting with them in the years to come. ◀

### Learn More

To find out more about association grants, read the article titled "Associations Using Grants More Frequently to Strengthen the Association Community and Inspire Big Ideas" at [associationadviser.com](http://associationadviser.com).



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## GSAE February Luncheon

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**ON FEBRUARY 17**, GSAE members met at the Ramada Plaza Atlanta Downtown Capitol Park for our first luncheon of 2016. Featured speaker and author **Mark Levin, CAE, CSP** educated attendees on how to “use MembershipMapping™ to engage members and give them the experiences they want and value,” based on his book, *Managing the Membership Experience*. In addition to the keynote presentation, Levin also led a deep dive discussion prior to lunch.

## GSAE April Luncheon

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**THE APRIL 20** GSAE Luncheon was held at the Cobb Galleria Centre, featuring award-winning speaker and trainer **David Brooks** on the “5 Secrets of Presentations.” The morning began with an “Aspiring CEOs” workshop led by **Beth Brooks, CAE**, author of the book *The New CEO’s Guide*.



New CAEs at the February Luncheon: **Damian Kavanagh, Ed.S., CAE**, **Jennie Nesspor, CAE**, **Tim Kline, CAE**, **Julia Boyd, CAE** and **Tangela Monroe, MBA, CAE**.



Emerging Professionals SIG gathered for a social event at TopGolf Atlanta in March: **Kevin Ksionzyk, Sebastian Almarino, John Roch, Derek Leman, Jacob Wilder, Kevin Shea, Shan Haugabrook, Julia Boyd, CAE** and **Jennie Nesspor, CAE**.



The Athvuengers gave away a fabulous Athens basket to one lucky Annual Meeting registrant – **Cindy Durham, CAE** (L-R): **Elizabeth Houell, Abby Hicks, Cassie Johnson, Missy Wilson, Taylor Eson, Katherin Puckett, Cindy Durham, CAE** and **Rita Lowery**.





Members enjoyed the "Aspiring CEOs" workshop led by **Beth Brooks, CAE** prior to the April Luncheon.



**Janell Martin, Kristen Hartman, CAE, Julia Boyd, CAE, Julie Anderson, CAE and Sarah Osbourne** catch up at the April 20 GSAE Luncheon.



Thank you to Richmond Region Tourism and their industry partners for sponsoring the April Luncheon: **Nancy Bass, Michelle Moker, Patty Yeager and Grace Wilson.**

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BY AMY DREW THOMPSON



**THE FOOD IS** what many attendees remember most about any event, which is why negotiating F&B can be a harrowing prospect for some association meeting planners. What tools can help you stretch your budget and get a better deal? **Robin North**, vice president of sales and services for the Macon-Bibb County Convention & Visitors Bureau, weighs in.

"I think the biggest mistake I've seen planners make is not understanding the true value of their business," she says thoughtfully. "Some groups plan a very limited F&B budget, then overestimate what

they can get for their money in terms of space rental offsets or menu choices. They neglect the reality of a balance of space requirements, menu and service options, as well as room rates."

Understanding the value of your food and beverage spend—"the whole spend," she emphasizes—is essential. "That includes meals, hotel restaurant and bar use, coffee shop, room service, etc."

Groups that use a lot of the latter, she notes, bring hotels additional revenue. "That justifies a bigger 'ask.' Make sure you keep your food and beverage use history—just as you would your hotel room or meeting space use. Documented, actual usage is a powerful tool at the negotiating table."

Everyone loves local color—and flavor.

Take advantage when possible, North says. "Ask about dishes that are unique to the area."

Important don'ts to remember? "Don't forget about your vegetarian and/or special-needs attendees [when it comes to food]; ask the F&B manager what options they can provide. Don't forget about alcohol: ask for the house brands and find out which are upscale. How does the venue charge for alcohol that's provided by a vendor or sponsor? What is their corkage fee and what does it include? And don't dismiss a complete meeting package. Find out what it includes and how flexible it is." It may just meet your overall budget! <

## Event Marketing: Past Imperfect Could Mean Future Fabulous

**WHILE YOU CAN** look to mentors, industry gurus and (duh!) the internet for new and exciting ways to market your gathering, sometimes glancing back over your shoulder can make all the difference.

**What Worked, What Didn't?** A detailed look at your last few meetings may hold the key to success moving forward. What can be gleaned: attendee demographics, level of interest/sales at given sessions or events, app downloads and, of course, social media interaction.

**Right Hand, Meet Left.** Your team needs to stay connected. Delineate team member responsibilities up front, shore up internal and external communication, and figure out

the best tools—digital and traditional—for the job. Get your team together to get their take on the best and worst of the last event and forge ahead with the good.

**Socialize!** Do you have a solid, steady infusion of blog posts, but no one's reading them? Get someone on point with your social media outreach—find out which platforms are most engaging to your membership and start scheduling. And remember what hit the mark last time. Be sure to monitor regularly so that any conversations generated as the event approaches are nurtured and any questions answered promptly. <





**SO YOU'RE GETTING** the gang together for a meeting, educational program or professional development opportunity? Whether you're planning regionally or considering the whole of Georgia, with so many vibrant cities offering so much in the way of quality hotel/conference center venues and off-site locations and fun things to do, how do you narrow down the list?

**Who's Coming?** Odds are you wouldn't choose the same birthday restaurant for your grandmother as you would your romantic partner. Same goes

for attendees. Do you have a clear picture of who they are? You should. Knowing your audience will factor into everything: hip versus affordable, walkable versus transportation, regional only versus longer-distance travel, tech-forward versus traditional. A detailed demographic breakdown of your guest list will help you craft the perfect party.

**What's the Why?** A meeting's objective should be front and center when doing site selection. Incentive trips are a natural fit with a beach, mountain or golf resort, but if your group is making time for something smaller and less grand—consider something airport convenient or smaller. Schools, small hotel chains, restaurants and even churches and libraries often have spaces ideally suited for trainings sessions or similar events—at a much lower rate than traditional meeting spaces.

**What's the Cost?** You may have fallen in love with a hip new venue the last time you were in Atlanta, silently imagining your attendees' delight over a farm-to-table dinner and craft cocktails beneath the vintage glow of its Edison bulbs—but really, is it worth the expense? Think about this event's purpose and where that money could be better spent. A more affordable city or venue isn't just better for your bottom line—it could prove better for attendance if it's more affordable for your intended guests, as well. ◀

## An Annual Meeting Idea: Break It Up!

**IT'S THAT TIME** again! So, what's on tap for your association's annual meeting? Odds are there's plenty of great information in the pipeline and education is on tap, but how do you plan on delivering? Gone are the days of morning-to-night sit-ins where speakers simply impart the data flow while attendees are expected to soak it all up like parched sponges. What's in now? Refreshers!

Breaking up informationally heavy general or even breakout sessions not only helps your attendees transition from one topic to another—they make for nice “caffeine” injections, energizing brains and getting them ready to learn anew.

**Quickie Team Building Exercises:** Whether your attendees are there with immediate colleagues or making new friends, these fun problem-solving games—some take just 15 minutes on average—do plenty to get the brain cells fired up while strengthening bonds or helping

forge new connections. What's more, they aid communication, decision-making and other valuable assets in any professional's arsenal!

**Music Soothes the Savage Attendee:** Anyone can get a little sluggish after a morning filled with PowerPoints. In the same way it fuels brain activity in infants, a little music—classical or otherwise—can do the same for your members. What genre you choose may depend on your demographics, but lively is a safe and stimulating bet!

**Work in Wellness:** Depending on the length of the session, consider allowing attendees a seventh inning stretch. Is your venue a pretty one? How about a quick walk around the hotel or conference center, or outside on the grounds if weather permits. Offer up a map with interesting things for them to look for—an herb garden, hummingbird feeders or an interesting piece of art in the lobby. ◀



# Unleashing **ATHENS** for **GSAE's Annual Meeting**

BY KHYRA WALKER

**ABOUT 60 MILES** northeast of Atlanta, not only will meeting planners find unique and historic venues and event spaces, but conference attendees will also be provided with a one-of-a-kind experience that reflects the town's creative energy. Athens, an eclectic town famously known for being the birthplace of R.E.M. and the University of Georgia, is also home to a vibrant downtown area, countless dining options and outstanding meeting spaces. Athens' atmosphere has proven to lead to record-breaking attendance for meetings and truly add value, inspire visitors and revamp the meeting culture norm.

Named for the Ancient Greek center of education, Athens was founded as a college town and over the past two centuries the town and university have grown and thrived together. Stepping across Broad Street is a step back in time: on one side of Broad Street is the vibrant, historic downtown entertainment district; on the other, University of Georgia's North Campus with its Greek Revival buildings dating back to the first decades of the 19th century. Now commonly referred to as "The Classic City of the South," Athens' uncanny charm and energy will help visitors of any age recapture their youth.

Athens can comfortably accommodate conferences, corporate events, tradeshow, and conventions alike, up to groups of 6,000. With meeting rooms just steps from world-renowned music venues and acclaimed restaurants,

The Classic Center is the area's largest facility, with spaces that suit any organization. The venue offers a 56,000 square foot exhibit hall, an 8,000 square foot atrium, 2,100 seat performing arts theatre, 35 meeting rooms and award-winning customer service.



Traditional boardrooms are a thing of the past as Athens has several creative and artistic spaces for out-of-the-box meetings, breakout sessions and soirees. Graduate Athens' sophisticated meeting room atmosphere and The Foundry can hold a small meeting of its own. The State Botanical Garden's Conservatory Great Room, a comfortable indoor space with the allure of the outdoors, is an original location to host a welcome banquet or reception. 19th century mansions along Antebellum Trails give guests a glimpse of The Old South's rich history.

Both The Classic Center and the downtown area have a few additions coming within the next few years. Plans for a Hyatt Place, connected to The Classic Center, are now coming to fruition as construction started in mid-March 2016. The hotel, which will bring

close to 200 new rooms to Athens, will be completed by fall of 2017. Two additional downtown hotels are also projected to begin construction within the next two years.

Steps from The Classic Center, more than 150 unique dining, shopping and entertainment options occupy downtown, ready for the visitor that wants to make the most of a quick break between sessions. Have a sweet tooth? Stop by Insomnia for a succulent, warm cookie. Want to grab a gift for a friend? Hunt for the perfect vinyl at Wuxtry Records, peruse local goods from Frontier, or search for UGA fan gear at Clubhouse, UGAfanz or Red Zone. Choices are limitless for visitors during down time in Athens.

For the foodie, Athens offers a large selection of dining options at locally owned restaurants. Athens' favorite Five and Ten, gives diners an upscale experience with a mix of Southern charm and European-inspired dishes. Hugh Acheson, James Beard Award-winning owner and chef, opened Five and Ten in March 2000 and the restaurant has since garnered national attention. The National, another Acheson classic, blends the comfort of a community restaurant with more of a Mediterranean influence. As farm to table eating is the food industry's latest trend, Heirloom Athens celebrates local community farmers by concocting a new take on

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# Hiring, Firing and Emails



BY JOHN P. HARRISON, CAE, CMP



**THREE BIG THINGS** have changed in the work environment since the last century: hiring, firing and the correspondence that goes with them—emails. Let me mention up front that this not a nostalgic lament about the good old days when folks could spell and had some semblance of manners (besides we all know nostalgia is not what it used to be). No, this is more of a how-to piece for things going forward.

First, hiring folks—especially young people. They had it right when they said good help is hard to find. I've posted some job openings recently, and my kingdom is for someone who sends a cover email

and a resume with no mistakes, shows up for an interview on time in business attire (and that means coat and tie or a woman's equivalent), speaks well (with a minimum of the filler "like"), sends a quick thank you and follows up to see if I'd like any examples of their work. And I'm not ashamed to insist on such standards. We could just dumb everything down, so we've nothing left but pointing and grunting. Could pointing and grunting get the job done? Yes, a very primitive one.

Firing folks, nobody likes. Or if you do like it, something's seriously wrong. When I was but a boy by modern standards of adolescence

(20-something), I shipped off to an overseas job whereupon I soon found out it was my duty to fire an old timer, a national leader in his field. Why me? I was a young outsider who could probably escape back to America without too much trouble. The lawyers fretted over what to do because the laws were socialist, and no one could be fired without a couple of years of labor court. So I looked under some rocks no one suspected and uncovered a travel receipt compensation "problem" on the part of the old man in question. Common practice, I was told, but still an open secret. However, it was a big part of this

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traditional dishes. Athens' favorite barbecue joint, Pulaski Heights BBQ, combines down home cooking with options for the meat-eater, pescaterian and vegetarian. Seabear Oyster Bar merges high quality seafood with the warmth of the local neighborhood bar. Their happy hour of all-you-can-eat oysters, half-priced beers and the occasional shot make for an appetizing afternoon.

Along with many delicious food options, there is also a growing craft beer scene in Athens. Terrapin, Creature Comforts and Southern Brewing Company all call Athens home and are a must-visit during free time. Only a few blocks from downtown hotels and The Classic Center, Creature Comforts is one of America's fastest growing breweries, having just opened two years ago but has already collected numerous industry awards and become a household name. Sip a Tropicalia or Cosmik Debris after a tour of the brewery. Located on the north side of town, Terrapin is an established Athens favorite and offer tours throughout the week.

If the arts and outdoors pique visitors' interest, the city is also fortunate to have The State Botanical Garden of Georgia and Georgia Museum of Art. The Georgia Museum of Art is the state's official art museum and features more than 9,000 pieces in its permanent collection and visiting exhibitions all year round. The 313-acre State Botanical Garden is an All-American Selections Garden and an Audubon Important Birding Area.

The truth is people love to come to Athens and are often excited to see when a meeting or convention will be held here. GSAE is one lucky group and Athens is waiting for your arrival. See you in June! <

*Khyra Walker is PR Coordinator for the Athens Convention & Visitors Bureau. She can be reached at [kwalker@visitathensga.com](mailto:kwalker@visitathensga.com).*

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employee's total compensation. I decided to finesse this. "Can I tell him I need his wisdom here in the office with no more travel allowed?" Yes, said the lawyers, and thus without labor law alarms, we cut his pay. He quit on the spot, got hired by an international association the next day, and—boom—I became his friend for life. A "good" firing, if you will, a little behind-the-scenes flair before the more up-front days of email.

And to be sure, the handful of firings I've been involved with since then have had emails as part of the mix. Someone sends an email (or in one case, a text) that is misdirected or puts in writing something that shouldn't have been: presto-change-o, bad things happen. There's proof, there's a trail; it's not so much he-said, she-said, but what's on the screen that counts. It's amazing what people will put in writing without much thought to where it will end up.

If one can master the art of email, good things will soon follow. Here's the promised how-to. Always check these five things, going from top to bottom of each and every important email:

1. To—Is it to the right person(s)?  
This includes who is copied and

who is on the reply list. Look at it, make sure it's right. Read all names before using reply all. This is thing one.

2. Subject—Give a meaningful subject line, never omit this, and remember that the subject line is not policed by spell check.
3. Attachments—If the text is going to be longer than one quick screen, put it in an attachment and just cover the highlights in the email's text. And, remember to attach the attachment you're meaning to send.
4. Run spell check and read it over. Look at the grammar. Make sure the content speaks well of you. This isn't that hard, people.
5. Signature—Sign off with your contact information below your name, at least once in the email chain. Can they contact you based on your email signature, and does it link to or provide appropriate information about your organization? Oh, and skip the preachy things about printing or whatever. It's probably not accurate anyway. There you have it, five easy pieces to help with emails, hiring and firing. Those three things so very often seem to intertwine. <

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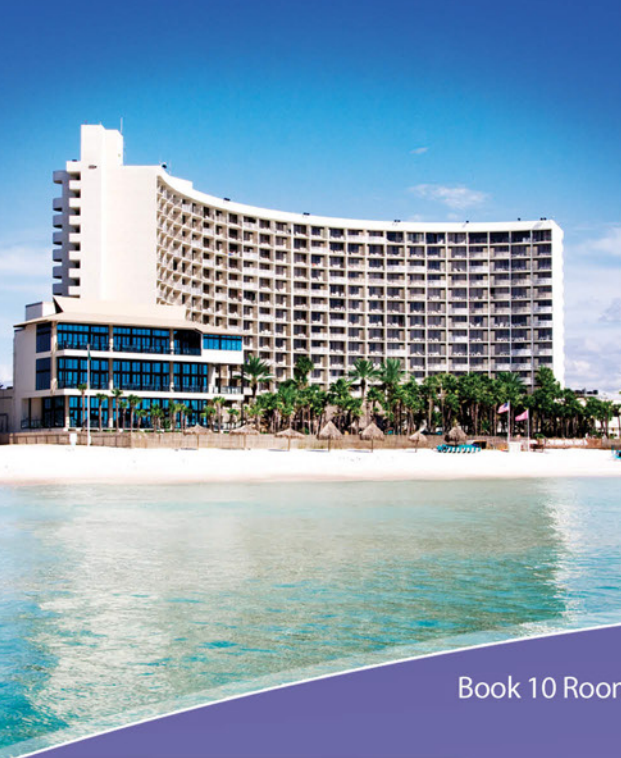
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