

## WORKPLACE STRATEGIES

# FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD BUSINESS

Everyone in the business world is working to keep customers happy. Association executives are no exception. In fact, when you consider that your customers and members are these stressed-out people—professionals dealing with tight budgets and challenging schedules—you may be feeling the most pressure of all.

In my view, organizations must adopt six “fundamentals of success” to remain viable.

**Fundamental 1: Add value.** People rarely join and remain committed to associations these days just to feel like a part of the group. You must understand members’ challenges and provide solid, critical knowledge to add value for them. Remember that data and knowledge are not the same; the former is a bunch of facts, the latter represents facts that are new, relevant, and well presented, and that equip leaders to function more effectively and achieve results.

**Fundamental 2: Communicate up and down, inside and out.** Establish a communication rhythm by creating regular meetings, updates, and messages for your members, and see to it that your team stays in step. Don’t surprise your members with changes, trends, or problems in the industry or profession. Inform them as soon as possible.

**Fundamental 3: Deliver results.** Getting results is about knowing what you need to achieve and doing it in the most effective way possible. For example, when you embark on any new project, plan it

carefully from day one. *Never* take a trial-and-error approach, as it’s not the most effective way to achieve the desired results.

**Fundamental 4: Conduct yourself and your business with integrity.** You are the face of your organization. Act with integrity at all times. Surround yourself with ethical people. Any lapses will reflect on you, and worse, on your organization and the industry that you represent.

**Fundamental 5: Invest in relationships.** Forging strong relationships is especially important for association executives, who answer to ever-changing constituencies. Always keep members on your radar screen; and remember that face time counts. Do breakfast with a member or business associate any time you can.

**Fundamental 6: Gain perspective.** Your job requires keeping a constant eye on the big picture. You must balance many issues and the needs of many people. There will be times when you don’t know the answers. Get comfortable with that uncertainty. Don’t be afraid to ask for help. But always strive to bring people back to the vision and mission of your association.

—Stuart R. Levine, author of *The Six Fundamentals of Success: The Rules for Getting It Right for Yourself and Your Organization* (2004, Currency/Doubleday), and CEO of Stuart Levine & Associates, Jericho, New York

