



Don't Overlook

the Importance of Staff Development!

By: **Molly Sausaman**, Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association (RMIIA)

I recently attended Bob Harris's "Organization Excellence Seminar" that CSAE sponsored, and while I walked away with all sorts of excellent information and a notebook full of tips, as I drove back to the office the piece that left me in awe was Bob's budget recommendations for association staff education and professional development.

I am fortunate to work with an executive director and board of directors who take staff education and professional development very seriously. As part of my annual employee evaluation, I am required to report on the status of the education and development plan I set forth for myself the previous year. I am expected to continue

to grow in my position not only to prevent stagnation but also to elicit enjoyment and personal satisfaction.

I manage the operations for RMIIA, and when I put on my business manager hat, it only makes sense to invest in staff development as a member service as well. Members get to know staff, so there's an inherent disconnect whenever turnover occurs. It's a benefit to members to have staff they can rely on to be the same people they've come to know and who have the knowledge that's required to make the association valuable. And let's not forget about the workflow disruptions that come with staff turnover.

So my question becomes: Can you afford NOT to budget for staff education and development?

According to Bob Harris, the average **budget for training is less than one half of one percent of operations, and often staff education is the last item to be funded**—if at all. Haphazard professional development planning is sure to leave staff feeling less than worthy of the same success that many associations tout about their member program offerings. For me personally, I would be disappointed by an employer that didn't view my professional development as a priority.

So when you're creating a plan for staff development and how to fund it, consider the costs associated with business interruption resulting from employee turnover. Wise businesspeople understand the value of a gratified staff. Education is essential to retaining good staff, and effective in the long term for retaining members through good member service and efficient association operations. Will you make a New Year's resolution to discuss the importance of staff training with your board of directors?

How much will it cost? On his website, www.nonprofitcenter.com, Bob Harris conveniently outlines his recommendations for minimum training budget per employee along with experience level considerations.

It's worth a visit to find out how your current budget stacks up.

But, from one association executive to another, I urge you to think of your staff as you do your members—after all, they are members of your TEAM, and what team succeeds without proper training? It's the perfect time of year to start working on a professional development plan. It's an excellent investment, and your board of directors will thank you! ■

Robert C. Harris, CAE, offers leadership training and strategic planning. (850) 570-6000, bob@RCHCAE.com. He makes association management documents available free at www.nonprofitcenter.com. His latest tools-based management products include the Association Self-Auditing Process® manual; the laminated Board Cheat Sheet; and Free-Association, Board Orientation Flashcards.

Molly Sausman is the Operations Director at Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association (RMIIA), and a members of CSAE's editorial committee.

Just to make things interesting, I solicited anonymous feedback from fellow CSAE members who have been on both sides of the staff-training-and-budget-allowance fence, and here's what they had to say:

"I don't think association leaders always realize how vital professional development is to us, their employees. We view it as not only an opportunity to grow personally, but we also see it as a representation of our leaders' faith in us and belief that we have the ability to learn and achieve more. There is no better way to tell someone you believe in their growth and potential, and subsequently earn their loyalty as an employee, than to sponsor their education."

"I have never been more inclined to leave a position than when our leadership pulled our professional development funding. Knowing that our CEO viewed professional development as a nonessential spending item made me completely question his dedication to everything that is outlined in our mission as a professional development association. It really made me step back and think about where the ship was being steered, and I questioned whether or not I belonged on that ship at all."

COLORADO GOLF GUIDE

Fossil Trace Golf Club
Fossil Trace Golf Club is one of Denver Colorado's premier public golf courses located in Golden, Colorado only 20 minutes from downtown Denver. In its short history, the golf course has enjoyed tremendous success and offers one of the best golf experiences available in Denver and the entire Colorado region.

- **Holes:** 18
- **Designed By:** Jim Engh
- **Golf Season:** Year Round
- **Driving Range Available:** Yes
- **Restroom Available:** Yes, with GPS
- **Hours:** 8:30 – 5:00
- **Dress Code:** Colored short-sleeved shirts, collared shirts, or slacks
- **Onsite Facilities:** Three Terraces Restaurant and Club

Tournament Information Contact:
Adam Fick, PGA
970-274-7331
afick@fossiltrace.com

Keystone Ranch Golf Course
Challenge yourself on this classic mountain golf course that winds through turquoise pines, ancient rock formations and across a nine-acre lake. The mountain links design and stunning panoramic views make this course absolutely unforgettable. Established in 1980, 7000 yards, Par 72.

- **Holes:** 18
- **Designed By:** Robert Trent Jones, Jr.
- **Golf Season:** May 10 – September 10, 2014
- **Driving Range Available:** Yes, included with golf fees
- **Restroom Available:** Yes, included with golf fees
- **Hours:** 8:00 – 5:00
- **Dress Code:** Proper golf attire. Colored slacks, golf shirts, and collared shirts, and white golf shoes.
- **Onsite Facilities:** Dining, breakfast to go, lunch and après golf. Pines meeting.

Tournament Information Contact:
Ted Anderson
970-274-7331
tanderson@keystoneranch.com

Coming in the Spring issue of Executive Memo – May 2015

Every year, Association Executive Directors are actively planning their fall meetings and golf tournaments here in beautiful Colorado. With so many incredible courses to choose from, their selection is not only critical to their budgets, but also critical to the desired experience they want for their members.

The CSAE membership includes Colorado-based national, regional and local associations with memberships ranging from 400 to 80,000. When they choose which course is the right fit for their fall tournaments...make sure they think of you!

Call to book your advertising: Julie Fincher, 303.502.2516, jfincher@associationmediapartners.com