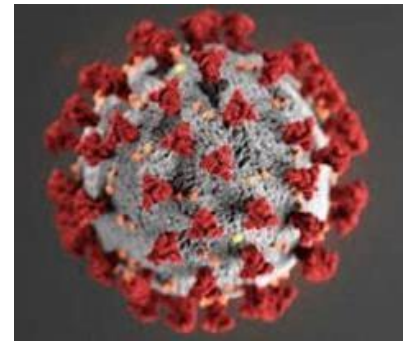


Inventures Insights

Adjustments During a COVID World

Every business, regardless of purpose, place or personnel, has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Alliances, associations and all sorts of collaborative consortia are no different and in some cases, because of their extensive geographic distribution, face a daunting task of combining inputs from multiple national, regional and world organizations to determine what to do next. How do you bring together a geographically distributed set of contributors to advance your mission when face-to-face meetings and travel are both severely hampered?



Inventures has developed a [three-phased framework](#) for advising its clients on how to move from the certainties of today into the uncertainties of tomorrow. Far from a crystal ball, the framework provides alliance Boards with practical considerations in the current COVID impacted world, coupled with thoughts on transitioning from the current to the next normal and then finally to a post-COVID environment. Considerations include mission relevance and output validation, health and welfare of members and staff, communication about adjustments and releasing those adjustments during subsequent phases.

Inventures' mission is to accomplish the mission of the clients we serve. Discussions using this [framework](#) have already begun with our existing clients and we welcome the opportunity to serve your organization with our strategic and Board support services.

Do you Dread Budget Planning?

The words “budget planning” do not usually invoke the fondest of memories as the creation of next year’s budget for a not-for-profit alliance or association can sometimes be difficult, cause conflict, and/or take a lot of time and resources. However, by following a simple and orderly process that ties budget expenses to an organization’s strategy, the development of developing a budget can be greatly streamlined and less contentious.



Here is a recommended process to help ease the pain:

- **Estimate Revenue** – Determine initial revenue estimates for the budget year based on current year’s revenue and expected changes in that revenue for the following year. The assumptions used to derive these revenue estimates should be documented so that they can be confirmed and/or adjusted during the budget development process. How conservative (or not) these revenue estimates are should be documented and clearly communicated, as that directly affects the “budget risk.”
- **Estimate Baseline Expenses** – Estimate the “baseline” operational and management costs. These are expenses for essential services and personnel that the organization typically incurs on a regular basis and are needed to run the organization. Expense assumptions should be also be captured.
- **Rally Other Budget Owners** – Request other “budget owners” to prepare their budget requests and each “budget owner” should be given a guideline with an approximate budget amount. These budget guidelines should factor in the revenue and baseline costs estimates for next year and consider how much was spent in previous years for each budget area.
- **Map Budget to Objectives** – This very important step can make a big difference in helping the Board determine how to prioritize budget requests. When developing budgets, each budget owner should tie the budget request to an organizational objective. See our article on [Implementing a Strategic Plan with “SMART” Objectives](#) for details on how to create objectives that support an organization’s strategic plan.
- **Create a Wish List** – In addition to the basic budget requests developed, budget owners should provide “upside” budget requests – that is, programs, services, activities that could be funded if additional budget was available. Providing optional budget items, enables the Board to make decisions on what programs, services, and activities to fund collectively across the entire organization.
- **Ready for a First Look** – At this point, the budget can be “rolled up” and a first version shared with the Board for review. The Board should then provide feedback to the finance committee and budget owners to revise the budget accordingly. It’s possible that several iterations of feedback may be required to achieve a final budget that meets the Board’s approval in terms of programs, activities, services, and risk level.

During the budget year, the Board should regularly review actual financial numbers compared to the budget and also the assumptions that were used to develop the budget. If variances occur, then the Board should revise the year's financial forecast accordingly utilizing the same information and thought processes that were used to create the initial budget. Doing that will ensure that the organization's priorities are maintained.

While there is much more detail behind the budget creation process outlined in this article, hopefully it can serve as a framework for getting started with your "budget planning" and those two words will not cause as much dread as they have in the past.

Leveraging Social Media and Common Considerations

For associations and alliances, social media can play an important role in keeping audiences informed and engaged, but the trick is how do you effectively manage and leverage a social media strategy? If your organization is just getting started on implementing social media or you are looking for a few tips on how to kick your social media strategy up a notch, here are a few essential considerations.



- **Identify the Right Platform** – Simply put, go where your audience goes. Social media is not a one platform fits all and requires research on how to best reach your target audiences through the various platforms including LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and Facebook.
- **Consistent Branding** – Use your brand design guidelines when building any social media page. In other words, use your logo, style and other recognizable images to help people quickly understand who they are interacting with.
- **Solid Content Strategy** – A consistent cadence of postings and tweets are key to keeping your followers informed and engaged. Post content that is relevant, worth sharing and uses calls to action. It's also important to practice the 80/20 rule: 80% educational, informational, and entertaining and 20% about the brand or organization.
- **Listen and Engage** – Monitor status updates for comments, complaints, praises, opinions, etc. and respond to both positive and negative comments. It's critical to foster open dialogue and transparency and respond in a timely manner.
- **Common Measurement Criteria** – Tracking metrics is crucial in order to measure the effectiveness of each platform. There are many social media metrics but a few of the basic analytics are number of posts/tweets, impressions, shares and followers.

Overall, social media can be a valuable tool in a marketing toolbox. You just need to be sure you're using the right platform. Adding another channel of communication helps your organization gain an additional touch point to inform, influence, connect and engage with your target audiences.

Client News: Mopria Alliance and Android 11 Printing Power

Our client, [Mopria Alliance](#) is very proud of the work it has done to provide powerful print capabilities to the new Android 11 update. The Alliance collaborated closely with the Google Android team and contributed software code, which, among other things, makes it easier to print, adds new options, and enables printing from thousands of apps that you couldn't print from before.

One of the most exciting new capabilities is the "Share-to-Print" feature of the Android Default Print Service. This lets you print images and documents from all kinds of social media and productivity applications directly from their Android device. Practically any Android app that allows users to share image files such as JPEG, BMP, PNG, and PDF, now also includes a simple option to print those items as well.

To take full advantage of the capabilities offered in the Default Print Service update, users should update their Android device to Version 11. For even more printing features, users can install the [Mopria Print Service app](#) from the Google Play Store.

Inventures supports the Mopria Alliance with a variety of management services including membership, finance, meetings, marketing and communications and executive director counsel.

