

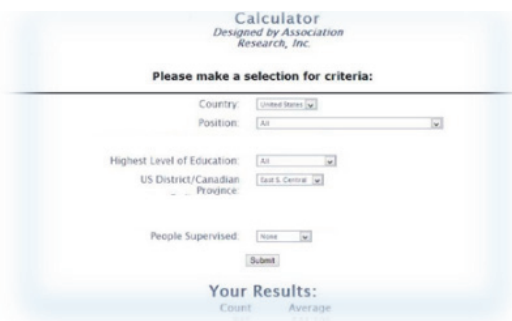
Creating Awareness of Your Trade Association

A main goal among Trade Association executives is to increase awareness of their organization, yet many struggle to do so. The rewards of increased awareness are clear—members receive increased public attention and knowledge, and the association develops greater potential for increased membership. Megan Kirkegaard, President of **Association Research, Inc.**, in Ijamsville, Maryland, offers three opportunities for trade associations to increase awareness of their organizations.

Broaden Website Appeal

One of the easiest ways to increase trade association awareness in the digital age is to leverage the organization's website. Your website not only promotes your association, but demonstrates that you have relevant, timely information to share.

Some trade associations have leveraged their website by publishing annual (or semi-annual) salary survey data, conveying the notion that they are cognizant of industry earnings and benefits. The association becomes the authority on what people earn and how compensation differs by geography, educational level, or other relevant variables.



The image shows a web form titled "Calculator" designed by Association Research, Inc. The form asks for several criteria: Country (United States), Position (All), Highest Level of Education (All), US District/Canadian Province (West, Centre), and People Supervised (None). A "Submit" button is visible. Below the form, a section titled "Your Results:" shows columns for "Count" and "Average".

And some trade associations take salary surveys a step further, hosting and maintaining salary calculators. These calculators provide fresh content and allow

visitors to further personalize their website experience. Additionally, calculators tend to encourage repeat visits. For example, members often have multiple office locations and may need to determine which salary and benefits are most appropriate for each geography. Finally, the presence of a salary calculator can be a very attractive benefit to those who are not yet association members and it may even increase their likelihood to join.



Evaluate Member Needs

Many trade association executives *believe* they know what entices members to engage with their organization. They are, however, often surprised when members are surveyed and the resulting data shows what members truly want or need. The data allow associations to redirect resources to deliver more valuable benefits. In turn, satisfied members are more likely to promote membership to others, boosting association awareness.

Member Needs assessments highlight the publications, resources, and events that have been most popular among members, and those that are most likely to grow the membership base. Many trade associations have learned to invest their resources more efficiently by abandoning those products and services which are of little value to members, and redirecting these resources to those which are of high value but could

be improved upon for greater member satisfaction. Further, member needs data can shed insight into what would be attractive to individuals who are not members; this provides the association with the opportunity to introduce itself with newly developed products and services that have broad appeal.

Demonstrate Industry Expertise

Members look to their trade associations to be in the forefront of industry knowledge. This knowledge can also be highly valuable to members who might lack the resources to access data on a large scale. A way in which trade associations can promote leadership authority and offer more industry knowledge is by sponsoring an economic indicator study.

One logistical benefit to these types of studies is that members do not need to report actual sales or shipment data (unless they want to provide this additional data to enhance the report). The trend data can be used to calculate a confidence index. Not only is the value of the confidence index important, but the trend of each index will show how business confidence changes over time. Many of our trade association clients find this type of report to be beneficial in getting an overall “pulse” of the industry without the additional time and effort of reporting actual data.

Trade association executives have commented to us that economic indicator studies shed insight into whether various industry segments, based on actual member experience, are growing, contracting, or stable. This data is very valuable to members as it allows them to benchmark their experience against those of their peers and help them to more accurately forecast the various factors that go into supply and demand. This data can also establish the association as an industry authority and can be used at various events to highlight the association’s expertise and knowledge of industry trends.



If you would like more information on this topic or have any other research needs, please contact Megan Kirkegaard, president of Association Research, Inc., at 240-268-1262, ext. 102, or mkirkegaard@associationresearch.com.

Since 1984, Association Research, Inc. (ARI) has produced customized survey research exclusively for associations and non-profit organizations, earning a reputation for analytical insight, professional service, and business integrity. Throughout its history, hundreds of professional, trade, and charitable organizations have been served.

While ARI's clients are exclusively non-profits, its services are wide ranging and include member needs assessments, benchmarking surveys, economic forecasts and analyses, marketing surveys, readership surveys, monthly business statistics, quarterly economic opinion surveys, annual operations surveys, and compensation and benefits surveys. ARI has successfully designed, developed, and processed thousands of survey instruments while maintaining total client confidentiality. ARI is a member in good standing of Insights Association, the national trade association that promotes standards and ethics for marketing research and data analytics.