Session D2: Creatively Generating & Maintaining Non-Dues Revenue

February 19, 11am – 12:15pm - Session Description and Learning Objectives

- Assess component activities to uncover the value they provide to sponsors and attendees.
- Prioritize non-dues revenue generation activities, identify prospects, and plan outreach.
- Communicate ROI. Build relationships to develop long-term partners.
- Train volunteer leaders to approach prospective sponsors.

**CACE Non-Dues Revenue Workgroup:** Diana Smith, CAE, Chair (AIA Arizona); Jeffrey Gill, FAIA (AIA Orange County); Mia Xavier (AIA Triangle); Billy Craig (Boston Society of Architects/AIA); Brenda Taylor (formerly AIA Wisconsin); Ann Dorough, CAE, Staff Liaison (AIA national)

**Tool #1: Assess Financials**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income source</th>
<th>2019 actual</th>
<th>2020 actual</th>
<th>2021 projections</th>
<th>2022 goal</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual CES course attendance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complex CES event (e.g., conference)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual event sponsorship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complex (multi-event) sponsorship</td>
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<td>Annual sponsorship packages</td>
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List the key member benefits associated with each type of income (e.g., credits, networking):

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List the key benefits to sponsors associated with each type of income (e.g., visibility, access):

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Tool #2: Develop Assets

What sponsors want:
- Grow awareness of their company, product, or service—and be remembered
- Position as a thought leader by offering knowledge, expertise, and problem-solving
- Differentiate versus their competitors
- Connect with a segment of your audience that they are targeting, and generate sales leads
- Show corporate social responsibility and how their values align with the audience
- All of this adds up to return on investment

Examine your sponsor prospectus. Which items have real value? How do you talk to sponsors about that value? Which things should be reworked or stopped?

Ways you can help sponsors reach their goals and deliver ROI:

Teamwork
- Have a real conversation with the sponsor. Genuinely be curious to learn what they seek to accomplish by working with you.
- Talk through ways to customize what you normally do that would be special for them.
- Ask how you can help the sponsor offer attendees a memorable experience. In virtual events, this can be challenging, so working together will help you find creative solutions. Experiment!
- Tell sponsors about AIA’s efforts on climate change, social justice, and the economy. Ask how they would like to tie in with any of those efforts at your component level.

Segment and target
- Get details on members’ affiliation, title, job function, project types, employer, geography, and membership type. Segment your mailing list according to any relevant characteristics to focus messages on those who would have the highest interest in a particular offering.
- Gather content-specific information on your audience when they register for an event. Ask what type of vendors or service providers they would be interested in hearing more about.
- Run surveys before and after an event to gauge awareness of your sponsors.

Marketing communications
- Protect your contact lists. Do not sell them. Instead, use your own channels to deliver print or digital messages to your list (or, preferably, to a targeted subset) on behalf of a sponsor.
Emails get ignored. Once you know what your registrants are interested in, invite them to private or small group presentations or demos with sponsors whom they will find of interest.

Allow for sponsored posts on social media feeds.

**Event branding**
- Offer strategic logo placement on event websites, at registration, at check-in, on the virtual session backdrop, on presentation slides.
- Offer the sponsor a placement for a short, engaging video on the registration or check-in page.

**Marketing data**
- Gather analytics of brand impressions sponsors got on your newsletter or webpage.
- Capture how many audience members attended a specific sponsored event.
- Analyze your social media reach via number of views, shares, and comments.

**Relevance and reach**
- Intentionally pair high-value sponsors to topics that interest them most and offer those targets first choice to drive home the exclusivity of your opportunity.
- Position a knowledgeable sponsor as a thought leader by presenting a course, serving on a panel or moderating a panel.
- If you pre-record a presentation, introduce your sponsor and let them participate in the live chat.
- Expand your audience to non-members. Examine CES sign-in sheets and add non-members to your mailing list. Try gathering more information from registrants to learn more about them.
- Work with components like yours to produce joint events. Co-promote each other’s events. You will both benefit from increased attendance.

**Uniqueness and memorability**
- Offer to include sponsor swag in a mailing sent to attendees before the event, e.g., good-quality branded merchandize, refreshments, product samples, and fun props.
- Offer fun breaktime sponsorships, e.g., virtual tour or happy hour, exercise class, mixology demo.
- Offer sponsorship of a virtual roundtable, hack-a-thon, or charrette where attendees solve a problem collectively. Allow the sponsor to assist in moderation duties.
- Once design awards have been chosen, reach out to service providers and BPMs participating in those winning projects and offer them a chance to sponsor.
- Consider opportunities for multiple sponsors to work collaboratively on an event.
- Offer gamification opportunities, if appropriate. Let sponsors offer prizes to attendees with highest engagement (such as through session attendance, surveys, polls, and social media).
Tool #3: Choose Priorities That Are Worth the Effort

Place on this chart the options you’re considering, by level of impact and effort. The impact metric in this exercise is **financial**, although your activities should align with your component’s mission also.

This chart (created by management coach Itamar Gilad) is a prioritization tool that shows not only the relative impact and effort of a proposed activity, but corrects for the natural tendency to underestimate the effort required and overestimate the impact generated by future activities.

Enlarge the chart as needed. Populate the grid. Choose your three best options to pursue first. These should be Easy Wins and Big Bets; if you have none of those, revisit Tool #2, to find better options.

![Prioritization Chart](https://www.italmagilad.com)

**Easy Wins:**

_________________________________________________________________________________________

**Big Bets:**

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# Tool #4: Plan Your Campaign

## Non-Dues Revenue Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action &amp; Priority</th>
<th>Description &amp; Status</th>
<th>Person on Task</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority Key</strong></td>
<td><strong>Status Key</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>H = high</td>
<td>C = complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>M = medium</td>
<td>P = in progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>L = low</td>
<td>N = not started</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H = hold</td>
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</table>

### Goal 1
- Action Step 1
- Action Step 2
- Action Step 3

### Goal 2
- Action Step 1
- Action Step 2
- Action Step 3

### Goal 3
- Action Step 1
- Action Step 2
- Action Step 3
Tool #5: Discover and Analyze Prospects

Who might want to be a revenue or in-kind sponsor of your project? (e.g., building product manufacturers, service providers, banks, attorneys, accountants, office suppliers)

What are you doing differently this year? How has your focus changed? Which businesses might find it a good fit to work with you? Do they care about AIA priorities (climate change, justice, economy)?

When looking for support for a specific initiative or project, who might take an interest in it?

What are your existing sponsors’ priorities now? How can you help them tackle these needs?

Write some talking points on why this opportunity is of value to a sponsor.

How can you be flexible? What “off-the-menu” options can you cook up for them that are valuable?
Tool #6: A Pricing Strategy for Content and Events:

Fresh thinking to generate more non-dues revenue via your audience:

- Content and events have value. They cost time and money to produce.
- Charging for content communicates that it has value.
- Registrants often no-show when things are free. But they usually come if they paid for it.
- Associations invest in free activities to expand their audience. Always have a plan to engage attendees and bring them into the fold as longer-term members or partners.
- How to explain to your audience why you are transitioning from free:
  - The component cannot offer services for free much longer without hurting service.
  - 2020 was unique. In 2021, we are gradually returning to charging for things of value.
- Start charging gradually for high-quality content. Your audience will adjust if they see the value.
- Segment your audience. Charge non-members more. Charge hard-hit members less. Always make it plain that members get a reduced price.
- If people complain about pricing, LISTEN. What can you improve to make it more valuable?

What does your professional audience need now? How will this content or event meet that need?

__________________________________________________________________________________________________

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What does it cost you to offer this content or event in cash, time, technology, facilities?

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What value does this content or event offer your audience? How do you communicate that value?

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__________________________________________________________________________________________________

If you offer “freemium” (basic ticket plus a VIP experience), what would make an upgrade worth it?

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__________________________________________________________________________________________________
Tool #7: Empower Your Board to Attract Sponsors

Sample message to the Board: Use this example to craft a message your President can send to every Board member, to motivate them to accept the role of growing sponsorship:

Why is it so important for our board to sell sponsorships? Because the AIA is a three-tier organization, the dues a member pays are distributed not just to our component but also the other tiers. And in general, membership dues in all associations are trending down as a share of total revenues.

Our annual budget comes ____% from dues and ____% from non-dues sources, such as CES programs, event income, and sponsorship. We also have these initiatives that need your support ____. [List any special projects, such as an office build-out, disaster relief, scholarship fund, or some other big goal]. Without healthy non-dues revenue, we cannot accomplish these initiatives.

This is not a difficult “ask” to make if you start where you’re most comfortable: your firm, as well as the engineers, vendors, and contractors you work with every day. You can meet with them, or if you prefer, send an email similar to what I’ve provided below.

Here’s a link to our current sponsors. Please review this list [attach your list of current sponsors] prior to reaching out to potential new ones, so as not to overlap what is already in place. I’ve also attached a copy of the sponsorship form so you can send to your contacts.

[If your chapter has staff, add this paragraph.] You only need to make the initial contact. Copy [insert name of component’s chief staff executive] and they will follow up. As we have done in the past, we will keep a tally of Board member pursuits and make these available to you to help coordinate your efforts. And if you overlap and reach out to a party who’s already been approached to sponsor, it’s not a problem. Just respond with a positive message: ‘Thank you for your support! I hope to see you at one of our many programs soon.’

Thank you all for making this a priority. We can discuss this in more detail at the Board meeting.

Sample message to prospective sponsor: Here’s another example of a message a board member has used for a prospective sponsor. The AIA Orange County board member was discussing the need for support for their new office space. The recipient was a vendor that the architect’s firm engages on projects. Modify this to bring in details for whatever project you are pursuing:
Hi Rita,

We have received a lot of great feedback from our office about Boral Roofing and your lunch seminar!

We appreciate your diligence to help us on all our projects towards completion. We continue to specify your roofing products as much as we can!

I serve on our Board of Directors for the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Orange County chapter. We have close to 1,000 members and a mailing list of over 2,100. We need the support of the design industry to create the many valuable events and programs.

We are excited to announce that we have moved to our new office at 1981 Orchard Drive in Newport Beach. You can read more about it here: http://aiaorangecounty.org/be-a-part-of-the-new-aiaoc-office/

There is still a phase 2 to complete this construction project, which is why I am reaching out to you. Please let me know if you would like to meet with me or the Executive Director, Jeffrey Gill, copied to this email to learn more about how you can support AIAOC. I have also copied our sponsorship form to review the several options available.

**Alternative sample message to sponsor:**

Hi John,

You and I have had the opportunity to work together for many years. What you may not know is I am a Director on the AIA Orange County Board of Directors. It is for this reason I am writing to you to support our organization. As a professional non profit organization, AIAOC needs the support of our design industry to provide valuable programs, advocate for our profession, and provide community events such as our yearly student design competition. You can learn more about AIAOC here: http://aiaorangecounty.org/

I’m reaching out to you to see if you can help support our efforts as an AIAOC sponsor. I’ve attached the 2019 sponsorship form so you can see the many benefits received. I’ve also copied the AIAOC Executive Director, Jeffrey Gill FAIA to assist in answering any questions you may have to help garner your support.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to help support our industry. I look forward to our continued work.