

Partners in Progress

How ASAE's Strategic Alliance Partners
are Moving Associations Forward



This is a dynamic time in the association world. Economic uncertainty and costs are high, but the appetite for live events is flourishing. Technology provides new means for engaging members differently, yet digital transformation can be daunting for small teams. Younger generations offer a potential new pool of members, but that often means evolving messaging and member value propositions.

Opportunities are everywhere, but they are not without challenges.

Fortunately, associations are rising to meet the challenges and possibilities of today and tomorrow – as they always do. They also know they can't do it alone.

That's where industry partners come in. The American Society of Association Executives is continuously exploring partnerships with organizations that help association leaders unlock efficiency, navigate complexity and make the most of opportunity.

These organizations can help bridge technology gaps, streamline event planning and more, freeing association executives up to put their time where it's needed most: advocating for the industries they support.

This resource connects you and your team with ASAE's **Strategic Alliance Partners** – who are equipped to do just that.

A conversation with ASAE

As the voice of the association industry, the American Society of Association Executives is committed to providing the support and opportunities association professionals need to succeed. In this conversation facilitated by SmartBrief, ASAE executive John Bacon describes how partnerships can help associations solve challenges and achieve goals.

How are association teams shifting in terms of what they handle in-house and what they need to pursue externally?

JB: More and more, I see association teams getting really clear about what they can do and being honest about what they should bring partners in for.

In-house, they're keeping the work that's closest to the mission and the member, which is: strategy, voice, community and the insights that come from really knowing their audience. Externally, they're much more willing to say, "We don't have the bench strength for this internally," especially when it comes to specialized tech, data, creative and execution-heavy campaigns and events.



**John Bacon, VP,
Sales & Partner
Experience**



Associations are looking to destination marketing organizations for their help in bringing destination strategy, local partner and attendee-experience ideas; and they turn to tech providers that can bring the platforms, data and workflows that make it all run.

So instead of trying to be everything under one roof, association professionals are acting more like architects. They set the vision, protect the member experience and then plug in the right partners to bring scale, expertise and speed where staff capacity just isn't there to accomplish the many things that need to be done.

Associations need to be many things to many stakeholders. Where are some of the greatest areas of need for external support?

JB: Associations are being asked to be everything to everyone, and that's just not realistic with small, lean teams. The biggest need for external support is around tech and data (platforms, integrations, AI, insight), marketing and content execution (campaigns, creative, storytelling) and the heavy-lift work like digital revamps and member experience redesign. They need help from partners to turn a meeting into a destination experience: local insights, offsite ideas,

community impact, safety and accessibility, and marketing support that helps them tell the story of, "Why this city?" and "Why this year?"

Tell us about the Alliance Partner program. What kind of resource is this intended to create for ASAE members?

JB: The Alliance Partner program is our way of being really intentional about who we bring to the table with ASAE, and how they show up for our members.

Instead of one-off sponsorships, these are organizations that make a multiyear commitment to ASAE and to the association community. We work with them year-round on thought leadership, education, research and experiences, so they're not just selling a product at an event. They're helping our members solve real problems.

"... association professionals are acting more like architects. They set the vision, protect the member experience and then plug in the right partners to bring scale, expertise and speed."

For ASAE members, the goal is to create a trusted list of go-to partners: DMOs, tech companies and solution providers who understand associations, invest in the association community and are willing to share their expertise, not just their logo. When you see an ASAE Alliance Partner attached to a program or resource, my hope is that you see these organizations as a vetted partner who is committed to our community and can help you move your work forward.

How have industry partners evolved in their ability to support association partners for today's opportunities?

JB: I've seen DMOs and tech/solution providers both make a big leap from "vendor" to "partner."

On the DMO side, it's no longer just, "Here's our convention center and a room block." The best destinations now come in with experience design, marketing support and community impact ideas in mind. They're helping associations tell the story of why they brought their meeting to this destination, with data on attendee behavior, content for campaigns, and curated local partners for DEI, accessibility and well-being proactively. They're thinking beyond the event date and helping shape the overall member experience.

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On the tech and solution provider side, partners have gotten much stronger at connecting their products to real association outcomes: member growth, engagement, non-dues revenue, better use of data and AI. Instead of just providing feature demos, they're coming to the table with roadmaps and use cases that reflect the realities of small teams and complex governance issues. They're also more willing to co-build pilots, share risk and collaborate with us.

So, the evolution is this: The DMOs and tech/solution provider partners who stand out today aren't just trying to finalize a sale. They're sitting next to us, helping design the strategy, bringing capacity and expertise we don't have in-house, and tying their value to the same outcomes our boards care about.



What are your recommendations for setting partnerships up for success?

JB: In my experience, strong partnerships don't happen by accident. They happen by design.

First, you have to be very clear on the “why” for both sides. What problem are we solving for members, and what does success look like for the partner? If we can't answer those questions in one or two sentences, we're not ready to sign anything.

Second, we need shared outcomes and simple metrics. Not a 20-line KPI sheet, but a small set

of things we'll actually track together: leads, engagement, behavior change, pipeline, whatever matters most. And we commit to looking at that data together, not just at renewal time.

Third, we have to invest in the relationship, not just the contract. That means regular check-ins, room for honest feedback and the ability to tweak the plan when something isn't landing. I want partners who will tell us the truth, and I owe them the same.

Finally, I think it's important to name roles and boundaries upfront: what lives with staff, what lives with the partner and how we'll show up

together for the member. When everyone knows their lane and we're aligned on the "why" and the outcomes, the partnership feels less like a transaction and more like a shared experience. That's where the real value is.

John Bacon serves as the Vice President, Sales & Partner Experience at ASAE, where he leads revenue growth across print and digital media, sponsorships, partnerships, content and ASAE's signature event operations. With a strong focus on delivering meaningful value for partners and elevating member engagement through the organization's content strategy, John plays a key role in connecting associations with the solutions that support their success.

ASAE's Alliance Partners are committed to meaningful collaboration with association and nonprofit professionals. Get to know the Alliance Partners today.

For more information on how ASAE's Alliance Partnership Program can drive value for your business and the association community, please contact ASAE today.



ASAE Strategic Alliance Partners

Advanced Solutions International

Advanced Solutions International (ASI) is a global leader in cloud software and services purpose-built for associations and nonprofits. ASI helps organizations strengthen member engagement, streamline operations and drive continuous performance improvement through a suite of integrated solutions grounded in proven industry best practices. Its portfolio includes iMIS®, the leading member engagement management system; Clowder®, the leading year-round mobile engagement platform; TopClass, an award-winning learning management system; and OpenWater, a top-rated application and review management solution.

As an ASAE Strategic Partner, ASI is committed to advancing the association community through thought leadership and practical guidance. This includes the newly released 5th edition of The Association Executive's Guide to Improving Organizational Performance. The book offers actionable frameworks, checklists and insights to help executives assess organizational needs, align technology with strategy and support ongoing performance optimization. It also features lessons learned from ASI leaders driving digital evolution across the sector. **Download a complimentary electronic copy today.**



ASAE Strategic Alliance Partners

Aplusify

Aplusify helps associations and nonprofits modernize operations, deepen member engagement and scale with confidence using Salesforce, Fonteva and AI. As a Salesforce Registered Partner and Fonteva Premium Partner, we deliver strategy-led implementations, analytics and AI-driven insights with ongoing optimization to turn data into measurable impact.

EVA Event Tech Hub

Aplusify's **EVA Event Tech Hub** helps meeting planners run the entire event lifecycle inside Salesforce with native integration to association management systems. Through built-in AI capabilities, planners gain secure, AI-driven insights and predictions from event data that stays fully within Salesforce.

MapleLMS

Aplusify's **MapleLMS** is a user-friendly, association-focused, AI-driven learning management system (LMS) that can be easily implemented and empowers member training and development. MapleLMS seamlessly integrates with various CRMs and AMSSs, including Salesforce, Fonteva, Novi AMS, MemberClicks, Protech, iMIS, Personify, Aptify, re:Members and more.



ASAE Strategic Alliance Partners

Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau

Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau (ACVB) is at the forefront of establishing Atlanta as a leading convention city and ensuring its hospitality community provides an exceptional environment for a wide range of events, meetings and trade shows. ACVB is also responsible for connecting meeting planners to Atlanta's incredibly collaborative local hospitality community. The organization acts as a meeting planner's essential link to a vetted network of partners, venues and suppliers, ensuring they have all the tools and resources necessary to build a successful event and effectively promote it to attendees.

As an ASAE Strategic Partner, ACVB is dedicated to being a trusted resource to this community of association leaders. ACVB provides strategic support and guidance to ensure leaders feel equipped to execute world-class meetings and events in Atlanta.

[Discover Atlanta Meetings today.](#)



ASAE Strategic Alliance Partners

Destination Canada Business Events

Associations don't just convene in Canada. They move ideas, sectors and communities forward.

As the national organization responsible for growing Canada's share of global business events, **Destination Canada** connects association leaders with the expertise, partners and environments that enable events with lasting impact — for members, missions and host communities alike.

Through a highly collaborative approach, Destination Canada brings together destinations, government and industry to provide access to world-class expertise, research ecosystems and visionary leaders across priority sectors, from critical minerals and clean technology to advanced manufacturing and AI. This ecosystem supports programs that foster fresh perspectives, inclusion and meaningful exchange.

Rooted in Canada's natural openness, associations benefit from trusted destinations, strong infrastructure and values-aligned experiences that resonate with today's members. The result is business events that go beyond gatherings to advance knowledge, influence policy, strengthen sectors and leave a positive legacy long after delegates return home.

Discover how Destination Canada supports association events at **destinationcanada.com/businessesevents**



ASAE Strategic Alliance Partners

Naylor Association Solutions

Naylor Association Solutions is a strategic growth partner for associations. We help professional and trade organizations modernize member engagement, diversify revenue and make smarter decisions through integrated communications, marketing, events, career solutions, association management software, full-service association management and data-driven insights.

With deep association expertise and a relentless focus on outcomes, Naylor helps associations stay resilient and positioned for long-term growth. Founded in 1969, Naylor partners with more than 1,600 associations across 80+ industries.

Discover Naylor Association Solutions today.



ASAE Strategic Alliance Partners

Discover Puerto Rico

A meeting in Puerto Rico doesn't just happen – it comes to life. At **Discover Puerto Rico**, we partner with associations of all sizes to design meetings that advance mission, values and member engagement while embedding the island into every program.

As a tropical destination with U.S. familiarity, Puerto Rico removes operational barriers, allowing planners to focus on meaningful connection, inspired learning and measurable impact. By eliminating friction around passports, customs and currency, we create space for new ideas and shared purpose.

Discover Puerto Rico operates as a strategic extension of association teams, supporting site selection and connecting planners with trusted local partners. This collaborative approach helps organizations navigate rising costs, compressed timelines and evolving expectations without sacrificing efficiency or reliability.

With modern convention infrastructure, strong airlift and a U.S.-structured meetings ecosystem, Puerto Rico delivers confidence. At the same time, our culture, people and sense of place transform agendas into experiences.

Experience Discover Puerto Rico today.



ASAE Strategic Alliance Partners

Experience Columbus

Planning with **Experience Columbus** is a partnership. We make every event feel like a showstopper, with support at the ready to execute your vision and make ambitious ideas a reality. Our team and our city are full of hardworking people who roll up their sleeves and roll out the red carpet, assisting with venue sourcing, marketing and on-site logistics so planners can focus on delivering value to attendees.

Through what Harvard first coined as The Columbus Way, we connect associations to a deep network of local universities, government agencies, private-sector innovators and nonprofit leaders. This cross-sector collaboration gives planners access to expert speakers and fresh ideas that elevate programming.

We can also help create immersive experiences that strengthen attendee engagement, from behind-the-scenes tours to curated volunteer opportunities. The result is events people actually look forward to attending, paired with a level of care planners come to expect as the standard.

Discover Experience Columbus today.



ASAE Strategic Alliance Partners

Momentive Software

Momentive Software exists to ignite the potential of every association by unifying the intelligence, technology and partnership they need, empowering them to connect more meaningfully, operate more effortlessly and achieve impact beyond what they ever thought possible.

Designed to help organizations connect more, manage more and expect more, Momentive's solutions span fundraising, learning, events, careers, volunteering, accounting, certification and association management. With Momentive, associations can expect more from a proactive partner with over 40 years of experience solving the challenges associations face. Momentive partners with organizations that believe "good enough" is never enough – so they can bring better outcomes for everyone they serve.

Through our partnership with ASAE, we engage directly with professionals who share our commitment to expanding reach, driving member engagement and optimizing operations, so association staff can focus on the highest and best use of their resources – serving their mission.

Discover Momentive today.



ASAE Strategic Alliance Partners

Visit Detroit

Visit Detroit, the official convention and visitors bureau, is not just here to welcome association leaders—it's here to put them in the driver's seat of an unforgettable meeting experience. Fearlessly embracing its culture and heritage, Detroit challenges assumptions and demands respect. When you bring your meeting here, you'll feel the city's distinct rhythm. Detroit stands out by showing up, offering a destination that inspires fresh thinking and meaningful connection.

As a longtime ASAE Strategic Partner, Visit Detroit demonstrates its commitment through over 25 years as a sponsor of the Diversity Executive Leadership Program (DELP), including both the Annual Reunion and DELP Breakfast. This enduring partnership reflects a deep investment in supporting diverse association leadership — helping cultivate emerging leaders, foster mentorship and create more inclusive pathways across the association community.

Discover Visit Detroit today.



ASAE Strategic Alliance Partners

Visit Tampa Bay

Meeting the Moment is **Visit Tampa Bay's** signature initiative that helps associations leave a positive and lasting impact on the community.

By collaborating with meeting planners, local nonprofits and civic partners, we integrate purpose-driven elements, such as volunteer projects, giving campaigns, sustainability programs and social advocacy efforts, directly into events. This approach allows visiting groups to support local needs while deepening attendee engagement and enhancing the overall meeting experience.

Whether it's assembling hygiene kits for local shelters, supporting environmental cleanups or contributing to youth programs, Meeting the Moment ensures that association events enrich Tampa Bay beyond the convention center. The

initiative reflects our commitment to community well-being and positions associations as leaders in meaningful, measurable impact.

Learn how your next event can Meet the Moment in Tampa Bay.



About ASAE

ASAE is a membership organization of more than 50,000 association executives and industry partners. Since it was established 100 years ago, its members have and continue to lead, manage, and work in or partner with organizations in more than a dozen association management disciplines, from executive management to finance to technology. With the support of the ASAE Research Foundation, a separate nonprofit entity, ASAE is the premier source of learning, knowledge, and future-oriented research for the association and nonprofit profession and provides resources, education, ideas, and advocacy to enhance the power and performance of the association and nonprofit community. Visit ASAE at asaecenter.org.



About



Serving nearly 6 million senior executives, thought leaders and industry professionals, SmartBrief is the leading digital media publisher of targeted business news and information by industry. By combining technology and editorial expertise, SmartBrief delivers the most relevant industry news — curated daily from thousands of sources — in partnership with leading trade associations, professional societies, nonprofits and corporations.

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