



## NEW MONEY

# Nondues revenue from nonmember education

By Andrew S. Lang

Most of the time when I search for associations that have found additional revenue streams, I hear about trade associations. So when I encounter something that's worked for a professional society, I am always keenly interested. This particular case is not only about a professional membership organization; it is about a relatively small group, with a budget of about \$1 million.

I heard about this idea from Jenna Kellam, program manager of conferences and sponsorship at the Maryland Association for Justice, Inc. (MAJ). The mission of the organization, which has about 1,300 members, is to improve the civil justice system through legislative advocacy and the professional development of attorneys who represent the injured. For MAJ, "professional development" mostly means the association's educational seminars.

Since 2006, MAJ had been working with a for-profit company to host video productions of its live seminars on the association's website. MAJ Executive Director David Walls heard that the company was also interested in talking with MAJ about potential speakers and topics that might be of interest to a broader audience.

This idea appealed to Walls, for two reasons. First, with a staff of five, his asso-

ciation could not produce all the programs that would be of interest to its members. If the vendor could do the heavy lifting, MAJ would be able to better serve its members by providing substantial new content. The second reason was straightforward: If MAJ could supply topics and speakers, the association would receive a percentage of the revenue.

Kellam says that by adopting this program, MAJ has added up to three educational programs a month to its calendar. Without the program, MAJ would likely not have been able to handle the added expenses and time required to produce those seminars.

In addition, MAJ doesn't have to spend money marketing the seminars to a broader audience—just more than 62,000 attorneys nationwide, as opposed to the 3,000 lawyers that MAJ normally reaches. The video production company covers that expense, to both MAJ members and nonmembers.

The planning process was simple to implement, Kellam says. The first step was to fill out a form for each suggested seminar that included the proposed speaker's name, the program title, a brief description of the program, and why it was being recommended. A contact at MAJ also needed to be provided.

Next, the company reviewed all the proposals it received in the past quarter from MAJ and the other organizations it works with, selected which webinars it wanted to produce, and then informed the organizations of the selected programs.

Of the total number of webinars MAJ has recommended so far, about a third have been selected for production. Kellam contacts potential speakers after she has

received word of acceptance. She says it's rare for speakers to decline to participate, because it is a great public relations opportunity for them and a good way for them to support MAJ.

Once a speaker accepts, Jenna connects him or her to the company. From there, the speaker and the company work together to ensure a quality webinar is presented. The speaker creates a PowerPoint presentation, runs through a technical rehearsal, and then presents the 75-minute webinar from his or her office.

After the webinar, Kellam receives a report detailing how many people attended, what the total profit was, and what percentage of those profits MAJ will receive. The net profit is determined by the vendor and then calculated on a per-attendee basis. MAJ's share is highest for members who attend the webinar, but it also receives a percentage for any nonmembers who attend.

MAJ has been sharing its content with a wider audience through this process since fall 2010. Kellam says that between September 2010 and June 2011, MAJ has earned \$14,000 in revenue, all of which is net profit. She stresses that at the current rate, the association hopes to average \$2,500 per month, or \$30,000 in the year to come.

For a \$1 million-a-year operation to net an extra \$30,000 a year is a handsome piece of business. The question I have for you and your association is: Do you have valuable content that you could share with a wider market?

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