

Survey Reveals Key Insights about Association Leadership Confidence and International Growth

Pandemic challenged leadership and shifted membership metrics

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WASHINGTON D.C. – May 20, 2021 – Factum Global, a consulting firm specializing in internationalization, today released the results of its “2021 and Beyond” survey at the “Seizing Opportunity: The International Future for Associations” webinar. Key insights included divided confidence in association leadership, technology demand to maintain and increase global member engagement, and a modest growth outlook despite an interest in international workforce expansion.

The survey showed that confidence in association leadership is mixed, with over half (52%) of respondents reporting confidence in association leadership (senior executives and boards of directors), while the remaining (48%) reported unsure to negative feelings towards the current direction of leadership. “These findings force us to ‘take pause’ and examine the root cause of such sentiments to design the best response,” said Magdalena Nowicka Mook, CEO of the International Coaching Federation and webinar panelist. “They also point to a need of support to organizations’ most senior leaders so they can elicit greater confidence of its membership”

While associations experienced a disruption in engagement and financial growth during the pandemic, due to canceled in-person events, 55% of respondents reported an increase in international participation due to their agility to adapt to technology and host virtual events. Today, associations acknowledge the importance of technology to strengthen engagement. As a result, membership success is now measured by engagement versus solely on growth. “Rather than focus on a return on membership, associations should shift their focus to a return on engagement,” said Peter O’Neil, CEO of ASIS International and webinar panelist. “The pandemic made the world an even smaller place and global engagement has increased. Now it’s up to us to continue to foster this new reality through our programming and international engagement strategies, and focus on what truly makes us more successful.”

Despite current growth challenges, 44% of respondents said they are considering expanding their international workforce, while 56% are unsure or will not expand. Additionally, 44% of respondents report two or more limiting growth factors, including the lack of financial resources, international know-how, governance support, and past experience. O’Neil added, “While some see ‘going international’ as an expense, I consider it as an investment in the future and would encourage my colleagues to do the same.”

The “2021 and Beyond” survey, conducted in collaboration with StrategicStraits Inc. (www.strategicstraitstinc.com) and Boardroom Magazine (www.boardroom.global), included responses from U.S.-based c-suite and other executives from associations, for profit and nonprofit organizations. Conducted from January to February this year, it is a normally-distributed sample size and includes nominal and ordinal data.

About Factum Global

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