

The Value of APICS

Effectively communicating the objectives of APICS and its chapters

In an effort to better understand how APICS chapters view their responsibilities to members—as well as their opportunities to help improve retention rates and grow the membership—*APICS* magazine Managing Editor Elizabeth Rennie asked a few chapter leaders the following questions. APICS Chief Executive Officer Abe Eshkenazi, CSCP, CPA, CAE, also lent his insights.

Why do people join APICS?

APICS members are looking for ways to help them remain relevant in their careers and competitive within their organizations.

People join the organization first and foremost for **personal development**: to make themselves more competitive and to advance in their careers. **Certification** is an opportunity to validate the education and competency that a member brings to the table. They also seek **education** via conferences, professional development meetings, the APICS body of knowledge (BOK), and training opportunities. In addition, members **network** with colleagues in order to discuss problems at work, determine the right tools and solutions for their businesses, and to find employment.

Organizational development is another key reason for joining. As John Newlyn, CFPIM, CIRM, CSCP, C.P.M., and president of the San Joaquin Valley Chapter, explains, “Most of our members are supported by their companies, which tells me that the companies see value in their APICS membership ... For example, if you send an employee to APICS and, as a result, they reduce your firm’s average inventory by \$10,000—assuming a 20 percent carrying cost, you’ve saved \$2,000 during the first year of their membership. Spending \$200 on dues to save \$2,000: What a great investment.”

What is the value of APICS membership?

While value means different things to different people, Eshkenazi says he hopes people choose to be members because of the content and value APICS provides, not the price of membership itself.

It’s about the value APICS members *perceive*, and value is at the heart of the matter. APICS leaders agree that, in order to assuage concerns about a 36 percent dues increase, the organization must remain focused on continuing to provide member value year after year. In order to help chapter leaders communicate this value, the following list of initiatives are being supported by the additional dues:

- APICS is expanding its course offerings to include finance for operations managers and global sourcing.

- APICS courseware will be continually updated. This includes major advancements to CSCP and CPIM courseware in 2008.
- More APICS Webinars-On-Demand, new career development Webinars, and expanded Webinar offerings will be available.
- The new APICS/SAP Benchmarking Study will enable APICS member companies to compare productivity through joint study.
- The APICS Web site will feature new design, heightened capabilities, and greater functionality.
- *APICS* magazine will be repositioned to offer a mix of digital and print content for every issue and additional digital content in between issues. Also, a new digital delivery option will provide faster, more reliable delivery to members. This is especially valuable for international members, who experience unreliable delivery of hard copies.
- APICS members will have exclusive access to Aberdeen Resources. This major online research repository is focused on the global, technology-driven value chain
- Members will receive discounts to the American Management Association, the largest nonprofit training organization. They also will receive member pricing and access to public seminars and exclusive Web site content.
- *The Production and Inventory Management Journal* will be relaunched in 2008.

In addition, Ione Dykstra, CPIM, Heartland District Manager, says that improvement of chapter services is actually the most important new benefit. “The new staffperson who is now going to reside in our district can really help by getting out there and talking to companies ... I think it will take a while to see results; but whenever I go out and tell a company what we have available—we get members. It’s not that people won’t join APICS; it’s that we’re one of the best-kept secrets,” she says. “I’m also hoping to see the revitalization of ‘train the trainer’ and getting the qualified instructor program out there.”

Dykstra adds that, although “everyone rumbles about the \$40,” it’s not a real problem. “We did have a few companies that told me, ‘Gosh, we don’t know if we’ll renew,’” she explains. “So I made a couple of phone calls, and I said, ‘Now wait a minute. You’ve got a long-term relationship with us; are you going to say that the \$40 is a deal breaker?’ Well, no, not really.”

What is the primary purpose of APICS chapters?

Is it education? Is it networking? Is it leadership development?

Dykstra says, “Chapters are free to do whatever they want.”

Interestingly, Newlyn says his chapter tailors some offerings based on what customers demand; for example, providing pencil and paper-based certification exams and in-house training. “Taking the BOK and customizing it for the local community [enables our chapter to] directly address the needs of our customer companies,” he says.

Unfortunately, due to financial and staff constraints, some chapters are simply unable to provide an adequate level of products and services. The dues increase will provide much-needed support for these chapters.

Who reaches APICS members?

APICS chapters have the most significant contact with APICS members. Eshkenazi explains, “Chapters have the primary responsibility to provide a touch point for members, and they do so much more than APICS corporate can. Chapters need to emphasize membership and the value membership provides.”

While providing education is vitally important, chapters also provide a context in which members network, enhance their leadership skills, and gain valuable career knowledge. These benefits are what the member experience truly involves.

Surprisingly, many chapters offer professional development meetings and courses to nonmembers for the same price as members. “In some programs, we have not made a large distinction between members and nonmembers ... If you want to participate in a professional development meeting, we really don’t care whether you’re a member or not,” Newlyn says. “We probably should make more of a distinction.”

“If you’re handing out the membership for free, it has no value,” Eshkenazi says. “We need to better communicate the value of membership and encourage our members to become invested in their own success.”