



## Reasons Not Good Enough to Invest in Certification

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I often get phone calls from association executives stating they've decided to create a certification program and want to know how I can help them to make it happen. What I say next likely really annoys them...for a few minutes anyway. I suggest they consider "un-making" that decision...at least temporarily. I know that's not an easy thing to do in the association-world. After all, you've already gotten approval from a task force, a standing committee, a house of delegates, and a board of directors"; but often the decision to develop a certification program is made prematurely and if the wrong decision, it can be a costly one.

Here are three reasons I hear for starting a certification program that just aren't good enough.

### TO MAKE REVENUE

Associations can generate revenue from certification programs, but it usually takes several years to turn a profit and some never do (yes, some are wildly successful). My point is that making revenue can certainly be a goal and/or a measure of success of a certification program, but it should NOT be the primary purpose.

### TO INCREASE ATTENDANCE AT EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

Trust me on this one: developing a certification program with mandated continuing education so that individuals will have to go to your conferences to get that education is NOT a good idea. Here's a better idea: improve your conferences!

### BECAUSE A COMPETING ASSOCIATION HAS ONE AND YOU CAN DO IT BETTER

A little secret: every association thinks their programs are better than their competitors. Maybe they are; maybe they aren't, but trying to one-up the competition is not a good reason to start a certification program, especially if theirs has a solid market share already. Of course, it's possible that you can create a unique and more valuable program and be successful, but this should not be the primary reason to start a program.

Sometimes an association that initially presents these not-good-enough reasons eventually determines that certification is a wise strategic decision; sometimes they don't. The key is to agree to step back and strategically consider what you are trying to accomplish and determine if certification is the most effective strategy for accomplishing it. Yes, this may delay progress for a month or two, but it may very well save your association a costly mistake or help develop a certification program that's much stronger for it.

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