Smarter Information:
Cut Through the Clutter with Content Curation

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Executive Summary

Content curation is a smart way for associations to help members stay up to date on important industry topics.

Since everyone is being bombarded with raw data from sources that may or may not be trustworthy, it is no longer helpful for an association to simply provide information to members. Instead, associations have a perfect opportunity to provide an incredibly valuable service by curating content for members.

Associations can curate industry news, topics, and even their own product and service offerings, so that members get relevant information, in the right amount and at the right time. Content curation should be used as part of an association's overall content strategy.

To work effectively, content curation requires people, processes, and technologies.

In this white paper, we outline the opportunities for content curation and share stories from associations using this approach.

The Scope of the Problem

Increasing Volume of Information

The numbers are staggering. Every day:

- 500 million tweets are sent
- 294 billion emails are sent
- 4 petabytes of data are created on Facebook
- 4 terabytes of data are created from each connected car
- 65 billion messages are sent on WhatsApp
- 5 billion searches are made

Further, someone watching YouTube videos for eight hours a day with no breaks or days off would need more than 16 years to watch all the content posted by just the most popular channels on the platform during a single week.

Declining Trust in Gatekeepers

Obviously, your members don't have to process all that data every day. But they still face information from newspapers, magazines, journals, radio, TV, apps, websites, email, and social media.

In the meantime, people have dramatically lost trust in the traditional gatekeepers of information – the media, the government, institutions in general. Only 17 percent of Americans trust the government to do the right thing and only 41 percent trust the media.

This allows propaganda to spread like wildfire on social media, Facebook in particular. ASAE's Foresight Works initiative identified declining trust as a key driver of change in the association world. "In the United States, trust in institutions—including government, media, science, and medicine—is falling, with important social, political, and economic implications. This decline in trust could fuel deeper political polarization and further erode social cohesion." Another recent study found that this is compounded by social media's ability to allow advertisers to target specific audience.

Declining Ability to Assess Information

Compounding the problem, people's ability to judge the credibility of information is also declining.

A recent Pew Research Center study found that Americans' ability to distinguish between opinion statements and factual reporting was "only a little better than random guesses."

Associations have a critical role to play in counteracting this problem. You can provide information from valid sources, highlight relevant facts, and help members use information to

make sense of their professional worlds. Content curation can help associations make members' professional lives better and easier, while not contributing to information overload.

What Is Content Curation?

Today's information problem isn't just about too much information. It's really about too much *raw* information. Associations have the opportunity to deliver more than what Google can – to locate, distill, and analyze the information members and other audiences most need to know, right now, and to place it in context that makes it meaningful to them in ways that help them make sense of their worlds and operating environments.

The good news is that associations already know how to do this. When an individual member reaches out directly to her association, staff members go out of their way to help her solve her problem, point her to the right resources, and provide the critical context that she needs.

Effective content curation scales up that one-to-one model, showing a new way for associations to serve members, helping them achieve their most important goals and solve their most pressing problems.

Content curation builds on the concept of museum curation, which refers to the art of selecting pieces from a museum's extensive collection of artifacts so that a given exhibit can tell exactly the right story. The selected artifacts shape the audience's experience nearly as much as the artifacts themselves, turning shelves of dusty antiques into a compelling narrative.

Associations already curate information. Every conference is a curated set of presentations, exhibits, and talks; every magazine is a curated set of interviews, trend-spotting, and other types of articles; and the association's programs themselves are a carefully curated set of offerings that ensures the association's value proposition by helping members achieve their most important goals and solve their most pressing problems.

Whether the focus is on content about or from an association's programs, products, and services or content related to its industry or profession, curation plays a critical role in helping organizations carry out their content strategies.

For more about curation's place in associations' larger content strategy, see the interview with Carrie Hane and Dina Lewis, The Role of Curation in Content Strategy.

Twenty years ago, *The Cluetrain Manifesto: The End of Business as Usual* posited that the web's real power lies in changing the ways people interact with organizations. The book's prescient premise was that, at their heart, organizations are human, thus people expect organizations to behave in human ways, talk in authentic, human terms, and provide real, human value. In 2011 Jamie Notter and Maddie Grant covered similar ground in *Humanize: How People-Centric Organizations Succeed in a Social World*.

What does curation look like?

Associations curate content in three ways:

1. **Sharing industry news.** This news-sharing usually consists of headlines and/or short summaries from industry publications outside the association, with links to original sources so members can delve more deeply into topics that interest them.

2. **Distilling industry trends.** Distillation is more than merely sharing specific news articles as they are published. It describes gathering the right information and providing the context necessary to tell a story about a topic or trend affecting the profession or industry the association serves.

3. **Sharing original information from the association.** Associations do this as a matter of course, through all our various platforms, but curating your association's content involves tailoring it to a specific audience, surfacing it at a time of particular need or relevance, centering it around a particular topic, personalizing it to an individual's expressed preferences, or delivering it based on that person's observed past behavior.

Associations can package curated information in a variety of ways:
*   Lists, a form of curation called "aggregation."
*   Visuals, such as charts, graphs, or infographics.
*   News clips, headlines accompanied by short summaries and generally linking to longer, more detailed pieces.
*   Timelines, a form of curation called "chronology," for events that take place in some sort of succession.
*   Trend-spotting pieces, generally short articles that identify the trend and explain why it matters now for your association's particular industry or profession.

And curated content can be shared on a variety of platforms:
*   Websites, presenting information topically, by combining taxonomy-driven content management systems and human insight.
*   E-newsletters, using AI-powered platforms (Multiview, SmartBrief, Naylor, rasa.io, Smart Letter) to deliver custom content to each subscriber.
*   Social media (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.), both to share information from the association and to identify new topics and trends.
*   Print (newsletters, magazines, journals, books and e-books, industry reports and studies, standards and guidelines).
*   In-person and virtual events

What it takes to curate content

People
Quality content curation requires knowledgeable, well-trained staff. Whether it's summarizing industry news articles, adding the commentary to trend articles that provides critical context, or selecting information about the appropriate association offerings for a given audience segment, your publications and/or communications staff has an important curatorial role to fulfill as part of their larger slate of responsibilities.

Curation work includes:

- Excerpting text from external sources to help readers quickly understand importance.
- Writing original, supplementary content to provide context.
- Classifying content into clear categories.
- Cross-linking to additional information.
- Optimizing and editing headlines to make sure content's intent and purpose are clear.
- Formatting content to be easily read and understood.
- Selecting images that enhance the message and add to the impact.
- Tailoring content and formats for different channels and audiences.
- Vetting external sources for integrity and quality.
- Crediting original sources appropriately.
- Filtering out irrelevant content.
- Inviting skilled collaborators to help and suggesting sources to them.
- Creating, using, and publishing criteria used to include or exclude content or sources.

Association staff can't always know everything about everything, and they can't always catch every important idea, topic, or trend. Fortunately, associations have access to a wealth of subject-matter experts among their volunteers, members, customers, industry partners, and corporate supporters. These SMEs often have insight into important and emerging trends and topics.

Technology
Artificial intelligence (AI) technology and tools are making an enormous difference in workload and in the quality of content offerings. Before AI reached its current level of sophistication, associations frequently used RSS feeds to deliver a stream of content, but it wasn't actually curated. AI allows associations to automate the process of providing different content to members and other audiences based on things like their demographics, their expressed preferences and interests, and their observed behavior.

6 Best Practices for Associations' Content Curation

Members and other audiences need associations' help managing the tsunami of information and misinformation coming at them.

Delivering carefully curated content will help associations be a vital partner, a trusted source of information that makes members' lives easier, pointing them to what really matters, and providing the context necessary to help them make sense of their increasingly complex and challenging professional worlds.

Here are six best practices for content curation.

1. Stop trying to be Google.

Aggregating information is a form of curation, to be sure, but it is the least useful form and, as our interview with Carrie Hane and Dina Lewis highlighted, it is unfortunately often the starting and end point of association "curation" efforts. (See the content curation maturity ladder diagram below.)

The core function of associations is to help the professions or industries we serve solve problems and achieve goals they can't on their own. That's why people associate in the first place – they're trying to accomplish things they can't do on their own.

Your association's community is experiencing information overload in a time when it's become increasingly difficult to assess the quality of that information due to the proliferation of sources and to the declining trust people have in traditional gatekeepers of information.

Piling on links to a bunch of stuff absent context isn't going to help solve that problem. If your association really wants to get to the root of this for the people you serve, you are going to have to move beyond mere aggregation and use multiple methods to achieve distillation/museum-style curation.

Recognize that there are many sources of information out there that are at least as good – if not better than – what your association is providing.

That's hard for associations to accept. We have a long history of being a, if not the, major source of information for the professions and industries we serve. Indeed, according to the 2019 Community Brands [Member Engagement and Loyalty Study](#) , industry information is still one of the top benefits members identify and is a key driver of retention (although, interestingly, association professionals think targeted content is far more important than members do).

However, with the advent of the open-access movement in scholarly journals, platforms like Google Scholar and Research Gate, limited metering and pay-for-only-the-article-you-want sites like *Harvard Business Review* and *Sloan Management Review*, and the ease with which industry

influencers can create personal platforms on sites like Medium and Twitter, your members have ready access to expert information. In fact, perhaps too ready.

What that means in a practical sense is that when it's time for your annual magazine/newsletter/blog/podcast focus on volunteer leadership, rather than writing another series of original articles on the topic, thus contributing to your members' problems with information overload, seek out the five best pieces of information available on the topic in the past year from recognized experts, present them, and provide context. Explain to your members why these are the best five articles written in the past year, why these particular pieces matter to them, how they specifically impact and compliment your association's particular volunteer structure and industry trends, why those particular individuals should care, and how those particular individuals can use the information contained to become better volunteer leaders in your community.

2. Curate and repurpose your own content.

Your audiences are looking to you for information about the profession or industry your association serves, and your association likely generates a lot of it, out of many different departments. That's actually the problem: Silos. We guarantee that your association is generating more content than you know, sending it out to various segments of your community in ways that may not be particularly well-coordinated, and likely not re-using it effectively.

Repurposing your own content is all about matching the type or format of the content to the appropriate delivery mechanism (i.e., creating an infographic from the data shared in a research report, turning excerpts from a conference presentation into an e-book). Digital agency Mighty Citizen, borrowing from content "guru" Gary Vaynerchuk, recommends formalizing an approach where one piece of long-form content provides fodder for presenting pieces of that content in various shorter form versions and distributing those shorter pieces through a variety of channels. (https://www.mightycitizen.com/insights/articles/how-to-make-your-content-work-harder-for-you)

3. Be member-centric rather than association-centric.

This concept is discussed at length in the Spark/The Demand Networks monograph *Leading Engagement from the Outside-In*, but the key point is: Seek to view the world from your members' perspective and focus on their most important goals and their most pressing problems, not on what the association's own internal goals are. Or, as Distilled Logic's Dina Lewis put it in our interview with her: "Associations should start with finding out what members need, then think about how to deliver and measure success."

4. Hire and train for new skills.

The original 2012 *Attention Doesn't Scale* whitepaper made this point as well, referencing the Institute for the Future's *Future Work Skills 2020* report.

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It now **is** 2020, and IFTF has updated that report, grouping their previously-identified 21st-century work skills in four main areas:

- Personal skills: Resilience
- People skills: Cross-Cultural Competency, Social Intelligence, Virtual Collaboration
- Applied knowledge: Novel and Adaptive Thinking, Cognitive Load Management, Sense-Making
- Workplace skills: New Media Literacy, Design Mindset, Transdisciplinarity, Computational Thinking

As you begin to transition your content staff from writing and editing to curating, context-providing, and sense-making, these are the types of knowledge, skills, and abilities you will need to nurture in them.

To quote the IFTF report:

"As smart machines are used for more routine manufacturing and service jobs, there will be an increasing demand for the kinds of skills that machines do not perform well. These are higher-level cognitive skills that cannot be engineered into mechanical systems. We call these 'sense-making skills' or skills that help us to create unique insights that are critical to decision-making… while data-mining and other tools can be effective at finding…connections, they cannot effectively place these findings in context. It takes a human being to assemble data and correlations and then meaningfully translate them into rich stories that garner attention."

5. Engage volunteers in new ways.

While the Baby Boom generation still provides numerically the most volunteers, [GenXers volunteer at the highest rates](#) (36 percent, versus 31 percent for Boomers and 28 percent for Millennials), and Millennials will be overtaking both groups soon.

As discussed in the Spark/Mariner Management monograph *The Mission Driven Volunteer*, due to both generational and life-stage issues, those Xers (and the upcoming Millennial and GenY generations) are interested in different kinds of volunteer opportunities than previous generations. GenXers, who are taking care of both school-age children and aging parents, need ad hoc, episodic, micro, and virtual volunteering opportunities. Meanwhile, Millennials and members of GenY are looking to hone specific, marketable skills in their volunteering.
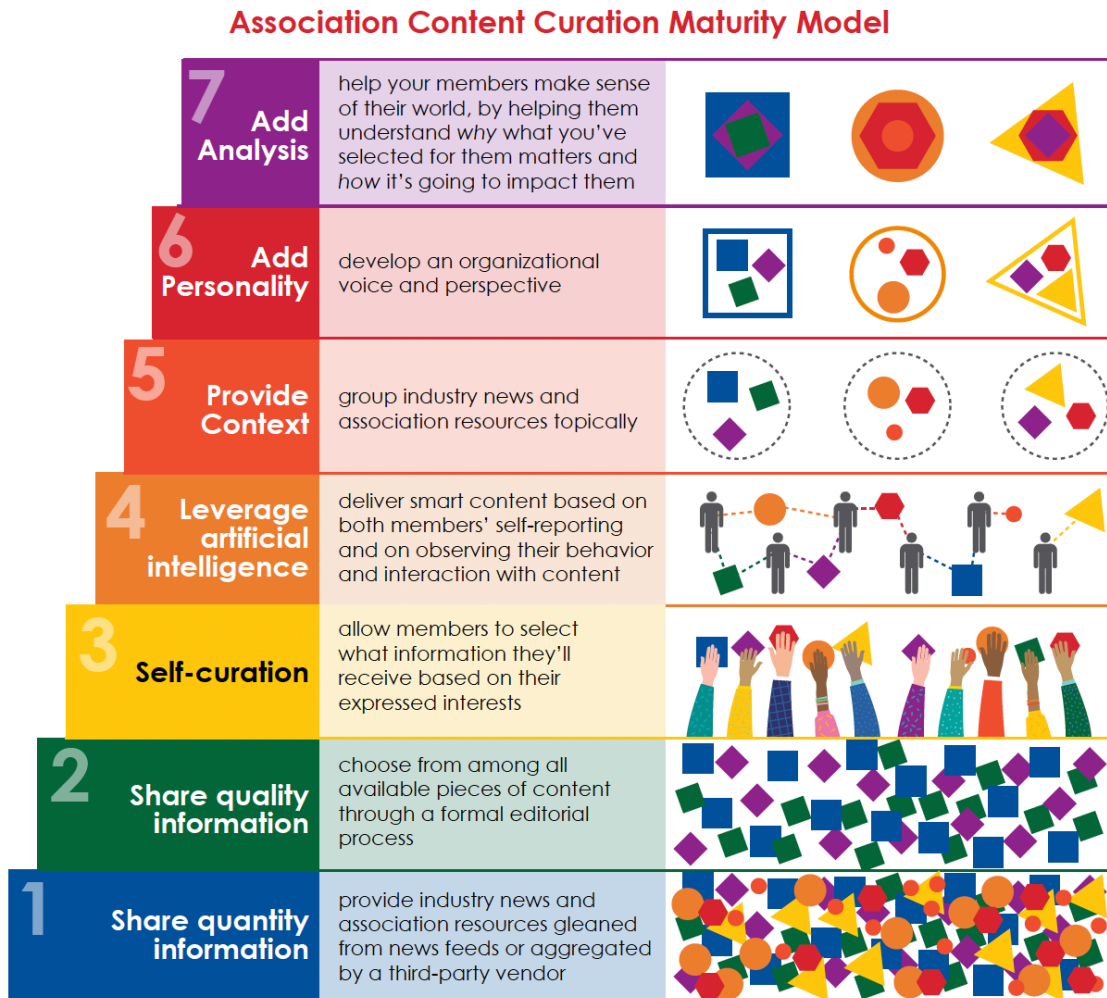
Two quick activities for your volunteers:
- Helping identify topics and trends
- Creating create the "sense-making" stories that show why particular content matters. Members can use these to build their own resumes and professional reputations.

6. Climb the Ladder of Curation Maturity

The world in which associations communicate with members and other audiences has changed dramatically, and we need to change our internal communication goals and processes accordingly.

All associations are somewhere in the curation maturity model.

Association Content Curation Maturity Model

7	Add Analysis	help your members make sense of their world, by helping them understand *why* what you've selected for them matters and *how* it's going to impact them
6	Add Personality	develop an organizational voice and perspective
5	Provide Context	group industry news and association resources topically
4	Leverage artificial intelligence	deliver smart content based on both members' self-reporting and on observing their behavior and interaction with content
3	Self-curation	allow members to select what information they'll receive based on their expressed interests
2	Share quality information	choose from among all available pieces of content through a formal editorial process
1	Share quantity information	provide industry news and association resources gleaned from news feeds or aggregated by a third-party vendor

Start by identifying where you are today, and then move gradually up the maturity ladder. To spot when and how to proceed:

1. Use the analytics from your existing communications
2. Conduct member survey about what kinds of information your members want

Members' information needs are changing quickly, so keep a close eye on your analytics, and revisit the approach every year.

Your association's goal should be to provide value to your audiences by helping them make sense of information and their environment. Rather than being only writers or even editors, the

communications department has to become the organization's team of managing editors – setting the schedules, developing and enforcing style, making sure that the right people are disseminating and receiving the right information. They need to be editors-in-chief, planning, assigning and overseeing rather than doing.

CASE STUDY: Content Curation Is a Journey

In 2017, the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT), a Chicago-based association for food scientists with about 75 staff members, realized they needed to make a major change to the way they collect, package, and share information online.

At the time, IFT's website contained topic-focused areas where its Science & Policy staff aggregated and shared content from external sources. Rae Ulrich, senior director of integrated marketing and brand strategy, was charged with changing that. Her challenge? To present IFT's content in more compelling ways and then help IFT's members and extended community find and use content they need and can't get anywhere else.

IFT is transitioning from simply gathering and sharing content to analyzing it and placing it in context for members. Currently, they publish a mix of content: original research, courses, magazine articles, and videos, as well as information from relevant government agencies.

As an example, Farida Mohamedshah, MS, CNS, looks at the intersection of nutrition, food science, and government policy in her role as IFT's director of nutrition science, food laws, and regulation. She and her colleagues work on high-profile issues like U.S. dietary guidelines, nutrition facts labels on food, food safety regulations, and global food traceability, not only providing critical information but also helping IFT members make sense of it. "When I create a toolkit on the nutrition facts label, for instance, I explain how our members can educate others on choosing foods that are healthy," Mohamedshah explained.

"My team and I pull together all of the association's content to present it, share it, and market it effectively," Ulrich said. "We use an overarching message matrix, a content calendar, to curate what we market, communicate, and promote on all of our different channels.

"A group of staff members reviews the messaging matrix every month to ensure alignment between the key themes and topics we've identified and the content we're providing. In addition to the toolkits, white papers, and commentary from Farida's team, we create things like podcasts that also line up with those themes. We're not highlighting just any content; we focus on the topics that are most important to our members," said Ulrich.

How do they know what those topics are?

"We work with a specific group of food science communicators on an ongoing basis, who have the pulse on hot and important topics, and we survey our members every year," said Ulrich. "We also look at search keywords from our website and good adwords, as well as social media engagement, to gain insight into what topics are trending."

Mohamedshah added, "In addition to what we hear from our communicators and members, internally, we identify key topics that we think are important for our members."

Next up on Ulrich's content "to do" list? Developing a centralized taxonomy to power the entire IFT website and private online community and using AI to help determine what topics to address, based on each user's interests. Ulrich's team also plans to build newsletters that will use AI to generate content based on each user's interests. "And then we'll be using that data to help us identify what content we need to create."

Questions for Reflection

What are the professional areas in which your members and other audiences are experiencing particular information overload stress? How could your association use curation skills to help ameliorate that stress?

Does your association have a formal content strategy? If not, how can you begin creating one?

Has your association assessed your level of content maturity? What tactics might you want to add to start moving to the next level?

How can you incorporate a curation mindset into your new or existing content strategy?

What is your association doing to track emerging trends and issues in your industry or profession?

What are the top five or ten respected sources of information in your industry or profession your association should be actively tracking?

How can your association build relationships with influencers in your industry or profession to cross-promote and share important information?

Who on your staff is in charge of curating your association's information?

How can you build a curation structure that takes advantage of the three modes of curation: machine/AI, crowd-sourcing, and expert curation?

What method(s) of delivery would your members and other audiences find most useful for the content you've curated for them?

How are you shifting what your association hires and trains for from 20th-century skills to 21st-century skills: resilience, cross-cultural competency, social intelligence, virtual collaboration, sense-making, new media literacy, etc.?

How can you engage your members and other audiences in helping your association change the way you relate to and relay information?

INTERVIEW: The Role of Curation in Content Strategy

During the process of researching this whitepaper, we had the opportunity to interview Carrie Hane (founder and principal strategist, Tanzen) and Dina Lewis, CAE (founder, Distilled Logic) who, with Hilary, co-authored *Association Content Strategies for a Changing World*, released by the ASAE Foundation in 2019.

You've just published a research report for the ASAE Foundation on content strategy. Obviously, curation is only one piece of an association's overall content strategy. What role do you think it plays?

Hane: First of all, I think we're misusing the word "curation." What we often call curation is actually aggregation. While creating a clearinghouse of information might have made sense 20 years ago, now we have Google. It's the human element that creates value, making sure that relevant, accurate, credible content gets to the people who need it.

Lewis: The technology has gotten ahead of the human element. Content marketers have been successful at selling AI newsletters. If you set your content up properly, with effective tagging and metadata, the algorithms can easily create a "personalized, curated" newsletter, but that's starting from what we can deliver, not with what people need. Associations should start with finding out what members need, then think about how to deliver and measure success, not just with opens and clicks. Measure how members are consuming and applying the content you're providing.

What trends are you noticing with regard to curation?
Lewis: Organizations are increasingly focusing on content that tells a story. My favorite (non-association) example is [_The New York Times_ Cooking](#) daily newsletter. My question is: Why aren't more associations picking up on storytelling, sharing industry perspectives through member stories, and using different forms of media (podcasts, video) effectively?

Hane: It's important to tell people why they should care, then provide the links. Good examples include [TheSkimm](#) and [Brain Pickings](#). Brain Pickings is particularly interesting. It comes out twice a week and consists of long-form essays with links to additional resources about the topic. When we think of curated information, we tend to think it has to be short, and it doesn't—it just has to matter.

What do you see as the key to successful, effective curation?
Hane: When you think of curation, what's the first thing that comes to mind? Museums. Museum curators collect many more artifacts than they use, and, from that whole warehouse of items, they make choices about what items to include that will tell a coherent story and create greater understanding.

Lewis: Providing context is key. That's what museum exhibits do, and that's what is far too often missing from the process of aggregation we mistakenly call "curation."

What advice would you have for associations that, referring back to the ASAE Foundation study, are trying to move from one stage of maturity to the next?

Hane: Begin at the beginning. Stop what you're doing and figure out what you should be doing. Rethink, rather than just redesign: "If we didn't already have a 150-year-old association and a 20-year-old website, what would we create?"

Lewis: Think carefully about accessibility of content. Where and when are your audiences accessing your content? Thinking through, from the member perspective, how they are using your content will help you present it in a way that it can be consumed when and where your audiences need it.

Hane: Get out of the box of your internal departmental structure and think more broadly about other applications of your content. If only one-third of the proposals for your annual meeting are accepted every year, how can you disseminate the other content that was proposed, outside the constraint of a three-day, in-person meeting?

Lewis: Take bite-sized pieces of professional development course content and present them to people who aren't ready to take that course yet. This is a low-risk, low-effort way to introduce your association's offerings to new audiences who might then go on to become loyal customers or members later.

INTERVIEW: Using Artificial Intelligence to Power Curation

Bryan Kelly (publisher-in-chief, Smart Letter) had an "aha" moment about the power of and need for curation in 2012 when he spoke with Elizabeth as part of her research for *Attention Doesn't Scale*, the earlier Spark whitepaper on content curation. That conversation led him to identify a challenge: "How do we take all this content being thrown at all of us, being overwhelmed with content, and help members figure out how to not get distracted by the noise and stay on top of what's relevant? I could imagine a member saying, 'I just got a dozen emails. I'm sure something here is important to pay attention to, but I'm overwhelmed,'" said Kelly in a recent interview.

From his post as vice-president of marketing at Aptify, an association management software provider, he spoke with Aptify CEO Amith Nagarajan, who was then leading the company's innovation lab. The team was building the technology that initially became an online community that would "pull content together and sift and sort based on each individual's stated preferences, the data about them in an association membership database, and AI-tracked behavioral data," Kelly said. "It was initially envisioned as a Facebook-style newsfeed in descending chronological order, with important content bubbling up. We cast it as a community because at the time many associations were predominantly using listservs or other community solutions as a way for members to get content, conversation, and networking at the same time."

That technology spun off into a separate business in 2015 called rasa.io, and a year after the new company launched, Kelly and the rasa.io team had another insight: They realized associations' content overload problem wasn't in their private online communities, but rather in their e-newsletters. In response, they shifted rasa.io's focus, offering associations the ability to create custom, AI-driven newsletters for their members. Associations could choose from a pre-selected set of content sources, monitor daily, and gradually narrow down to the top sources and topics to deliver the most relevant stories for each person based on their stated preferences and demonstrated behavior.

In early 2019, Kelly and Nagarajan formed yet another company, Smart Letter, that uses the rasa.io platform to build newsletters for specific audiences. "Rather than convincing a legal association to adopt rasa.io, we instead created a newsletter for lawyers. Of course, associations can also use rasa.io on their own to streamline their content curation and publishing process."

Kelly emphasized the importance of combining technology and human expertise to achieve the best results. "Most of rasa.io's clients have a human team provide a creative, personal touch by choosing the content they want to highlight, and then they let the AI pull the rest of the content," Kelly says. "They use technology to take over the manual aspects of gathering, sifting, and sorting content, and then the people can focus on summaries and highlights, applying the right editorial voice, and making sure that the content inspires members to open and click on it."

The approach has proved to be successful. "When associations start providing personalized, relevant content, we're seeing open rates increase from around 10 percent to, typically, up to 40 percent. Associations are having better success getting information out that members need to know, and they are creating more enriching connections with members," said Kelly.

Kelly's advice to associations: "If you're spending a lot of time pulling content for a daily newsletter, you get focused on 'I just have to get this out.' Let the AI tools manage the mechanical part of the process and focus your energy and resources on *why* this piece of content is important. With so much content out there now, sifting and filtering it can be a full-time job. If you focus all your energy and resources on that, there's no time left for commentary or critique or to highlight what's important. Let the technology do what it does best and enable your editorial or content team and your writers to do what they do best."

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About the Authors

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Hilary Marsh is president and chief strategist of Content Company (https://contentcompany.biz), a content and digital strategy consultancy. She helps associations get better results from their content by improving their practices for content creation, governance, management, and promotions. Content Company's association clients include the American Bar Association, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, American Water Works Association, Endocrine Society, National Association of Convenience Stores, Institute of Food Technologists, and Florida Realtors.

As managing director of Realtor.org from 2005 to 2011, Hilary oversaw the National Association of Realtors' member website and created the association's groundbreaking social media strategy.

Hilary has been a leading content strategy practitioner, mentor, and professor since 1999. She developed and taught the first graduate-level content strategy courses for Kent State University. She has been published, quoted, and her work cited in major industry publications including *Content Strategy for the Web, Content Strategy at Work*, and reports from Prophet/Altimeter. She is a co-author of *Association Content Strategies for a Changing World*, a report issued by the ASAE Foundation in 2019.

Elizabeth Weaver Engel

Elizabeth Weaver Engel, M.A., CAE, chief strategist at Spark Consulting LLC, has more than 20 years of experience in association management. Although her primary focus has been in membership, marketing, and communications, her work has been wide-ranging, including corporate sponsorship and fundraising, technology planning and implementation, social media and internet strategy, budgeting, volunteer management, publications, and governance.

Spark provides strategic membership and marketing advice and assistance to associations that have the willingness and capacity at both the staff and board levels to ask themselves tough questions and take some risks in service of reaching for big goals. Forget settling for incremental growth by making minor changes to what you're doing—we're going to uncover and solve the root problems that are holding your association back!

Elizabeth combines a focus on asking the right questions and finding and implementing creative solutions with a broad understanding of the association sphere. Throughout her career, she has excelled at increasing membership, revenue, public presence, and member satisfaction while decreasing costs through a focus on the efficient and effective use of data, staff, and technology to serve organizational goals and constituents.

Prior to launching Spark, Elizabeth consulted in online campaigns and marketing and internet and social media strategy for Beaconfire Consulting and in a wide range of subject areas in

association management in the not-for-profit consulting practice at RSM McGladrey, Inc. She has also served associations directly in a variety of positions, including director of member services and IT, director of marketing and sponsorship, vice president of marketing, and acting CEO.

Elizabeth is a certified association executive (CAE) and holds a master's degree in government and foreign affairs from the University of Virginia.