National Association of Estate Planners & Councils 46th Annual Conference
Medium Size Council Breakout session on Council Leadership Day
November 11, 2009

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Which disciplines does your Council admit for membership?

Each council has the core disciplines, Attorney, CPA, Trust, CLU, CFP®. Some have merged the declining CLU folks with the CFP® designees.

Which are not accepted and why?
Varied and see notes on affiliated members - There was much discussion on the affiliated members and here are the notes on this topic -

> The categories have been condensed and more current to the industry. Drop the CLU and/or combine all the financial services folks, CLU, ChFC, CFP®, investment folks
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> Adding the affiliated advisors (allied professionals) – accredited, designations, other requirements, These folks include, real estate professionals, appraisers, land trust execs, long-term care insurance, Chartered Financial Analysts (CFA), probate judges, investment brokers. The general feeling was to be careful with adding these persons to the EPC because they can water the focus of the advisors that are dedicated to estate planning work.
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> Some councils are not using planned giving as a category and some are
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> Types of membership – "other" category? Adding the planned giving category, controlling the membership and making sure the category will be successful.
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> Some have weighted membership requirements to limit the number of attorneys or other categories?
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> For the councils that have other categories how do we handle the issue of acceptance by the council i.e. board discretion, other potential problems – fairness, solicitation type of members looking for business.
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> The important part of membership is to make all board members, general members responsible for recruiting for their discipline. Especially the younger persons that are getting their experience and training – we need to nurture our replacements.
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> Offer gifts / rewards to members sponsoring new members – gift certificates, candy, etc.
> Have a specific committee that will be focused on the work or recruitment.
> Have better control of the attendance to allow for room for other younger potential members especially in the attorney category.

At any point, was this a struggle? Why or why not?
Some had issues others no issues at all…

Briefly discuss recent struggles and success with regard to the following issues:
Membership
See above notes. In general most councils are struggling with building membership.

Do you struggle with the increased number or percentage of any particular discipline? How have you overcome these difficulties?
Some modest discussion but it was seen that some councils have percentage or maximum number of members per category.

Do you have a Junior / Student / Associate membership categories? What are the parameters?
Some did - not much discussion on this topic…

Programs
Speakers and how we recruit these folks – some (20%) allow their own to speak – no sales pitch, pretty clear guidelines and topic oriented. No migration from the topic goal. Some ancillary topics, retirement planning, travel and what seniors like to do, Adams Family Estate planning model (example from the NAEPC webinar tools)…

Meeting times and frequency –

Breakfast – 15%
Lunch – 30%
Dinner- 50%
Mix – 30%

Special events (social - cool location i.e. museum, wine tasting, spouses, antique road show venue, local charity, sporting event, golf, skeet shooting, sea world, travel excursions (included in dues $250),

Many councils will have Day long or half day seminars - partnership with other similar organizations to attract and pay for the best speakers.

Some are doing satellite conferences with the various services to get the better speaker – especially helpful for those regions that are hard to travel to…

Mixture of the dues only, dues and dinner fee, menu option where the member can choose to pre-pay the meals or not…

Sponsorship of meetings ranged from some councils having many sponsors that provide pretty good $$ for their sponsorship. Some groups truly rely on the sponsorship to fund their council. There were several councils that had no sponsorships for any event. There were a few that had some sponsors but was extra $$ for the Council.

Many councils had an economist present sometime during the year

Some ideas for speakers – Probate judges, very few have their own members speak

Finances – most have annual dues that cover all meals or events (these councils pray for low attendance.) Guest fees range from $10 to $65 per event. Some councils allowed one potential guest “pass” to encourage members to invite potential attendees.

Board of Directors
We're the best! All over the place and some had as many as eight years of service on the board. Some have a fixed position for treasurer position for continuity. Others had four year chair rotation. Some had no fixed term limits, simply a board of volunteers.

One group has an eight person board, two year terms and the leadership is appointed at the Board level.

Most boards are made up of the various disciplines with no over-weighting of any discipline.

Some boards have volunteers that serve for many years in the same position, i.e. treasurer, program, etc. Can be a good thing if it is a great volunteer, but can cause grandfathered issues.

Does your Council have a sponsorship program?
Yes – Sponsors – What are the parameters for those organizations that may not be directly affiliated with estate planning? Outside organizations i.e. Home care agencies, charities, sponsorships range from $200 - $2,500 per event / year. One group has a sponsor giving $7,500 per year. Sales pitch for 10 minutes is allowed for some. First come first serve is the criteria; some are working on specific rules for managing the conflicts and criteria for sponsorship.

Does your council employ a paid professional administrator?
About 50% have an admin person.

How has this experience benefited your group?
Taken the burden off the board and council for various tasks that the admin person can manage better than the volunteers. For those that have the person it is of great benefit!!

What are the duties associated with this paid position?
All the general details and administration work, web site, data base, etc… Work Compensation? Some fixed expense- $300, $400, $650 per month, some hourly. Some use a professional administration services firm.

What types of unique venues have you had events at?
cool location i.e. museum, wine tasting, spouses, antique road show venue, local charity, sporting event, golf, skeet shooting, sea world, travel excursions (included in dues $250),

General Discussion, Ideas, etc.
Orientation of new members – special attention, packet of info, pre-function before regular meeting, mentors.

Have a special meeting held that where case study is discussed and ideas for some disciplines.

Sponsor a special social service event – habitat, food bank, have t-shirts for those that attend…

Financial incentive to build membership?   Some offer gift certificates (Starbucks, dinner, $50 cash, year end drawing of $200, free lunch, bottle of wine, etc.

LinkedIn idea to attract new member, especially younger members. Use this service to reach out to those that use this service that may be interested in joining.

What have been the most successful topics?
Physician
Collectable speakers
Ethicist
Special needs trust
Insurance – how the insurance industry works and how they make money – from the top guy and how to analyze policies
Legislative update
Economy update
Panel discussions with a topical theme
Congressional update
Health care debate
Social Security office –
Probate Judge, administrator
Funeral home director, Veterans
Mock trial
Business succession
Business Mediator / arbitrator
IRS Agent – estate tax audit