

JOINING TRADE AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS: KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Trade and professional associations (TPA's) serve a wide range of industries and sectors, and their membership can include small businesses, large corporations, and individual professionals. Examples of trade and professional associations include chambers of commerce, industry trade associations, professional associations, and business networking groups. Some are national in scope, while others are regional or local.

Ten Benefits of Trade and Professional Associations

1. **Advocacy:** Trade and professional associations often advocate on behalf of their members on issues that affect their businesses. For example, a professional association might lobby for policy changes or work to shape industry regulations.
2. **Building credibility:** By joining a reputable trade or professional association, members can signal to clients and partners that they are committed to professional development and staying current with industry changes. Active participation can help members establish themselves as a thought leader in their industry.
3. **Community involvement:** Many TPA's are involved in charitable and community-building activities, providing opportunities for members to give back and make a positive impact in their community.
4. **Discounts and perks:** Many TPA's offer their members discounts on products or services that are relevant to their industry or profession. This can include discounts on software, office supplies, travel, and other business-related expenses, negotiated with product and service providers with the intent of providing incentives to association members to increase membership and member engagement.
5. **Industry insight:** TPA's often provide access to resources and information that can help members stay up to date on industry trends and best practices. This might include access to industry-specific news, publications, and research.
6. **Lead generation:** One of the key benefits of TPA membership is the opportunity to network with other professionals. These connections can be a valuable source of referrals and introductions to potential clients. Additionally, TPA's often host events and conferences, which can be a great way to meet potential clients and customers.
7. **Marketing and branding opportunities:** Some TPA's offer marketing and branding opportunities, such as the ability to list a business in directories or the opportunity to sponsor events.
8. **Mentoring:** Many TPA's offer mentorship programs or other opportunities for members to connect with more experienced professionals in their industry or field. These programs can

provide valuable guidance and support for business owners who are new to their industry, facing challenges generating sales, keeping customers happy or recruiting good talent.

9. **Networking opportunities:** TPA's often provide opportunities for members to network and build relationships with other professionals in their industry. This can be particularly valuable for small businesses or for individuals who are looking to expand their professional contacts.
10. **Professional development:** Some TPA's offer training and educational opportunities, such as conferences, workshops, and webinars, which can help members improve their skills and knowledge and meet continuing education requirements.

According to [Marketing General Incorporated's 2022 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report](#), the top five reasons members join TPA's are to network with others in the field (63%), for continuing education / professional certification (36%), to access specialized and/or current information (35%), to learn best practices in their profession (31%), and to attend conferences / trade shows (23%).

Membership Costs

The cost of joining a trade or professional association can vary widely depending on the specific association, the type of services and resources it offers to members, and the target audience. Some associations may have annual membership fees that range from a few hundred dollars to several thousand dollars, while others may have monthly or quarterly fees. There may be a one-time initiation fee in addition to the membership fee. Some TPA's may also offer different levels of membership, with varying costs and benefits. For example, a basic membership may cost a few hundred dollars per year, while a premium membership with additional benefits may cost several thousand dollars per year.

It is important to carefully research and compare the costs and benefits of different TPA's before deciding to join. Speaking with current members to get their perspective is a prudent way to help gauge the potential value of membership.

Assessing The Return on Investment ("The ROI")

The return on investment (ROI) for joining a trade or professional association can vary greatly depending on several factors. The potential benefits of membership, such as access to networking opportunities, industry expertise and knowledge, professional development opportunities, and access to discounts or other perks, can all contribute to an increase in profitability or efficiency for the business, which can ultimately lead to a positive ROI. However, it is important to carefully consider the costs of joining the trade or professional association as well. The ROI analysis should factor in membership fees, travel expenses for meetings or events, and any additional time and resources required to participate in the association. It is also important to keep in mind that the ROI may not be immediate, and it may take some time to see a return on the membership investment.

Member Engagement

Whether joining as an individual or enrolling an entire team, the time commitment should be considered. For example, if the objective is lead generation, attending member meetings regularly and remaining engaged in those meetings is a necessary task to maintain the business presence that serves as requisite to being top of mind when a fellow member has a potential opportunity to share. When a lead is received, the obligation of twofold: Providing topnotch lead follow-up and making a good effort to reciprocate with a qualified lead. Not every lead received will convert into profitable revenue, so it is important to set specific goals and maintain a progress tracking method see how membership is impacting the business.

Association meeting hours should also be considered to avoid business and personal conflicts. Individual accommodations should not be expected, so if, for example, the association meets weekly at 7AM and that time conflicts with getting kids to school or attending a regularly scheduled staff meeting that impacts the schedules of others, then this known conflict should eliminate membership into that specific association because a membership without participation is a waste of resources. Consideration should be given regarding the availability of each team member to be enrolled to avoid employee morale and turnover issues. Consulting with team members regarding their availability and willingness to represent the company in external events could yield far better results than forcing attendance.

Antitrust Laws

Members of any trade or professional association should be mindful of dialogue and conduct that could result in violation of the U.S. antitrust laws. Congress passed the first antitrust law, the Sherman Act, in 1890 as a “comprehensive charter of economic liberty aimed at preserving free and unfettered competition as the rule of trade.” Subsequently, Congress passed two additional antitrust laws: the Federal Trade Commission Act, which created the Federal Trade Commission (The FTC), and the Clayton Act. Essentially, antitrust laws are designed to protect competition and promote fair trade in the U.S. economy. Consequently, under the Sherman Act, plain arrangements among competing individuals or businesses to fix prices, divide markets, or rig bids are “per se” illegal – meaning that there is no defense or justification allowed. Violations of the Sherman Act can include a variety of activities, including:

1. **Price fixing:** Agreements between businesses to set prices at a certain level rather than allowing market forces to determine prices. For example, a group of car manufacturers agreeing to raise the prices of their vehicles to increase profits.
2. **Division of markets:** Agreements between businesses to divide a market by territory or customer type. For example, two airlines agreeing to only serve certain routes or only sell tickets to certain types of customers.
3. **Group boycotts:** Agreements between businesses to refuse to do business with certain suppliers or customers. For example, a group of retailers agreeing to stop carrying a particular brand of products to pressure the manufacturer to lower its prices.
4. **Monopolization:** Attempts by a single business or group of business to control a market through predatory or exclusionary conduct. For example, a company engages in predatory pricing when it sells products at a loss to drive competitors out of business.
5. **Merger violations:** This involves mergers or acquisitions that result in a reduction in competition in a particular market. For example, a merger between two large retailers in the same market could lead to higher prices to consumers.

The penalties for violating the Sherman Act can be severe, with both civil and criminal consequences for the business involved, for the individuals, as well as for the association if it is found to have participated in or facilitated the price fixing. It is therefore important for businesses to become familiar with the Sherman Act to avoid engaging in dialogue that violate the Act.

Finding the Best Fit

There are more than 8,000 trade and professional associations listed in the [National Trade and Professional Associations Directory](#), an organization that describes itself as the authority on trade and professional associations in the United States.

For example, a flower shop that is woman-owned could find value in joining its local Chamber of Commerce, being part of the National Association of Women Business Owners, and become a member the Society of American Florists. After assessing all factors, including time and cost considerations, that business owner might find membership to all three associations to be unrealistic. Carefully reviewing the cost and benefits of each association should help narrow down the best fit.

Here are some trade and professional associations that FUNDELVA has compiled to help businesses and individuals with the process of evaluating associations and narrowing down the best fit. It is important to remember that ultimately, the decision to join any trade or professional association will depend on the specific needs and goals of the individual or business in question.

U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Description: A Chamber of Commerce directory to find local chambers of commerce by states, territories, or cities.

Website: <https://www.uschamber.com/co/chambers>

ENTREPRENEURS' ORGANIZATION

Description: A global, peer-to-peer network of business founders and builders who gain the wisdom and support we need to realize our ambitions and move the world forward, together.

Website: <https://hub.eonetwork.org>

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES (NFIB)

Description: NFIB is the voice for small business. NFIB advocates in every state and in Washington, D.C., giving members a voice in public policy debates on the local, state, and national level.

Website: <https://www.nfib.com>

NATIONAL VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESS ASSOCIATION (NaVOBA)

Description: NaVOBA's mission is to create corporate contracting opportunities for America's Veterans and Service-Disabled Veteran's Business Enterprises (VBEs/SDVBEs) through certification, advocacy, outreach, recognition and education.

Website: <https://www.navoba.org>

VETERANS AND MILITARY BUSINESS OWNERS ASSOCIATION (VAMBOA)

Description: VAMBOA is your non-profit veteran business trade association that promotes and assists Veteran Business Owners, Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses (SDVOB) and Military Business Owners.

Website: <https://vamboa.org>

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN BUSINESS OWNERS (NAWBO)

Description: Founded in 1975, NAWBO is the unified voice of over 11.6 million women-owned businesses in the United States representing the fastest growing segment of the economy.

Website: <https://www.nawbo.org>

THE WOMEN'S BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER (WBDC)

Description: Founded in 1986, The Women's Business Development Center (WBDC) is a 501(c)(3) nationally recognized leader in the field of women's business development and economic empowerment.

Website: <https://www.wbdc.org/en/about-us/>

MINORITY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Description: The U.S. Department of Commerce, Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) is the only federal agency solely dedicated to the growth and global competitiveness of minority business enterprises. Clients are U.S. minority business enterprises (MBE's) owned and operated by African Americans, Asian Americans, Hasidic Jews, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders.
Website: <https://www.mbda.gov/who-we-are/overview>

NATIONAL MINORITY SUPPLIER DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Description: Founded in 1972, the National Minority Supplier Development Council Inc., (NMSDC) is the longest-operating business growth engine for the broadest group of systematically excluded communities of color (Asian-Indian, Asian-Pacific, Black, Hispanic, and Native American). NMSDC's advocacy agenda consists of three focus areas: access to contracts and procurement opportunities, access to capital, and a Federal MBE designation.
Website: <https://nmsdc.org/about-nmsdc/>

NATIONAL LGBT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (NGLCC)

Description: The National LGBT Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC), the business voice of the LGBT community, is the only national advocacy organization dedicated to expanding economic opportunities for the LGBT business community.
Website: <https://nglcc.org/about-us/>

ASIAN AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Description: The mission of the Asian American Chamber of Commerce (AACC) is to encourage, facilitate and support the economic growth and sustainability of the greater Washington area community by building bridges and serving as a resource for the AAPI business community. AACC achieves this mission through business networking programs, summits, expos, business development workshops, seminars, and other special programs and events.
Website: <https://www.asian-americanchamber.org>

NATIONAL BLACK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (NBCC)

Description: The National Black Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to economically empowering and sustaining African American communities through entrepreneurship and capitalistic activity within the United States and via interaction with the Black Diaspora.
Website: <https://www.nationalbcc.org/index.php>

CARIBBEAN AMERICAN CHAMBER

Description: The Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Inc. (CACCI), founded in August 1985, is a statewide membership organization, which has developed expertise in providing business assistance to small and start-up business owners, in areas of business planning, financing, procurement, certification, expansion, and export/import opportunities.
Website: <https://www.caribbeantradecenter.com>

NATIONAL HISPANIC BUSINESS GROUP (NHBG)

Description: The National Hispanic Business Group (NHBG) was founded in 1985 by a group of prominent Hispanic entrepreneurs with a vision to create an organization entrusted with developing opportunities for Hispanic Businesses.
Website: <https://www.nhbg.org/>

NATIVE AMERICAN CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION (NACA)

Description: NACA exists for Tribally owned businesses, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and Alaska Native Corporations to collaboratively protect contracting rights and access to business development through advocacy and education.
Website: <https://www.nativecontractors.org>

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR AMERICAN INDIAN ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Description: The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. With over 50 years of assisting American Indian Tribes and tribal people with business and economic development, we have evolved into the largest national Indian specific business organization in the nation.

Website: <https://www.ncaied.org>

NATIONAL HISPANIC BUSINESS GROUP (NHBG)

Description: The National Hispanic Business Group (NHBG) was founded in 1985 by a group of prominent Hispanic entrepreneurs with a vision to create an organization entrusted with developing opportunities for Hispanic Businesses.

Website: <https://www.nhbg.org/>

Trade & Industry-Based Associations

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES (ACEC)

Description: Representing thousands of companies and more than 600,000 engineers, architects, land surveyors and other specialists, ACEC is the voice of the engineering industry in Washington, DC and throughout the nation.

Website: <https://www.acec.org/about/>

AMERICAN HOTEL AND LODGING ASSOCIATION (AHLA)

Description: AHLA is the singular voice representing every segment of the hotel industry including major chains, independent hotels, management companies, REITs, bed and breakfasts, industry partners, and more.

Website: <https://www.ahla.com>

AMERICAN PETROLIUM AND CONVENIENCE STORE ASSOCIATION (APCA)

Description: APCA aims to support and offer its members a platform for legislative representations, education, leadership, collective buying power, community outreach, strong local Chapters and coalition with other trade Associations.

Website: <https://apca.us>

THE ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTORS OF AMERICA (AGC)

Description: The Associated General Contractors of America, the voice of the construction industry, is an organization of qualified construction contractors and industry related companies dedicated to skill, integrity and responsibility. Operating in partnership with its Chapters, the Association provides a full range of services satisfying the needs and concerns of its members, thereby improving the quality of construction, and protecting the public interest.

Website: <https://www.agc.org/about-us>

BUILDING OWNERS AND MANAGERS INTERNATIONAL (BOMA INTERNATIONAL)

Description: Founded in 1907, the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) International is a federation of U.S. local associations and global affiliates. The leading trade association for commercial real estate professionals for more than 100 years, it represents the owners, managers, service providers and other property professionals of all commercial types, including office, industrial, medical, corporate, and mixed-use.

Website: <https://www.boma.org>

INTERNATIONAL FRANCHISE ASSOCIATION (IFA)

Description: As the world's largest membership association for franchisor, franchisees and franchise suppliers, the International Franchise Association protects, enhances, and promotes franchising.

Website: <https://www.franchise.org>

MEDICAL GROUP MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (MGMA)

Description: MGMA combines the expertise of more than 60,000 members with industry-leading data to develop timely practice solutions.

Website: <https://www.mgma.com/membership>

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN WINERIES (WINEAMERICA)

Description: WineAmerica is a 500-member strong organization that encourages the growth and development of American wineries and winegrowing through the advancement and advocacy of sound public policy.

Website: <https://wineamerica.org>

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOME BUILDERS (NAHB)

Description: The National Association of Home Builders represents the largest network of craftsmen, innovators and problem solvers dedicated to building and enriching communities.

Website: <https://www.nahb.org>

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MANUFACTURERS (NAM)

Description: The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) works for the success of the more than 12.8 million people who make things in America. Representing 14,000 member companies—from small businesses to global leaders—in every industrial sector, NAM is the nation's most effective resource and most influential advocate for manufacturers across the country.

Website: <https://www.nam.org>

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PATENT PRACTITIONERS (NAPP)

Description: The mission of the National Association of Patent Practitioners is to provide networking, education, collegial exchange, benefits, and a collective voice in the larger IP community on patent law practice, so patent practitioners can flourish and achieve the highest levels of competence and professionalism in their practice.

Website: <https://www.napp.org/>

NATIONAL GROCERS ASSOCIATION (NGA)

Description: The mission of the National Grocers Association is to ensure independent, community-focused retailers and wholesalers the opportunity to succeed and better serve the consumer through its policies, advocacy, programs and services.

Website: <https://www.nationalgrocers.org>

NATIONAL MULTIFAMILY HOUSING COUNCIL (NMHC)

Description: NMFHC is the place where the leaders of the apartment industry come together to guide their future success. With the industry's most prominent and creative leaders at the helm, NMHC provides a forum for insight, advocacy and action that enable both members and the communities they build to thrive.

Website: <https://www.nmhc.org>

NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION

Description: The National Restaurant Association's mission is to serve its industry and impact its industry's success.

Website: <https://restaurant.org/>

NATIONAL RETAIL FEDERATION (NRF)

Description: The National Retail Federation has represented retail for over a century. Every day, passionately standing up for the people, policies and ideas that help retail thrive.

Website: <https://nrf.com>

SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FLORISTS (SAF)

Description: The Society of American Florists is the association that connects and cultivates a thriving floral community for all participants of the U.S. floral industry and offers exciting benefits for retail florists, growers, wholesalers/importers, suppliers, event florists, and researchers.

Website: <https://safnow.org>

ABOUT FUNDELVA

Fundelva, LLC is a lending brokerage firm. We help our clients obtain residential mortgages, business loans and commercial real estate financing.

We elevate the funding experience by being reliable, resourceful, and relentless in pursuit of loan approvals to help our clients meet their residential, business, and commercial real estate funding needs at the best possible rates and terms.

CONTACT US

Phone: 844-904-9400

E-Fax: 407-217-1722

Email: Funding@Fundelva.com

Web: www.Fundelva.com

Business Address: 255 Primera Boulevard, Suite 160, Lake Mary, FL 32746