



Findings from the First Phase of ASAE Foundation's Technology Success Study

In partnership with

delcor



Technology developments continuously change the way associations do business, creating opportunities for increased capacity and engagement with members and other partners. But given the range of options available, association leaders must make informed choices to balance their business needs and the capabilities of staff with the needs of their members. CIOs within associations are increasingly engaged in broader organizational questions, as technological developments have become a primary component of many associations' operations and strategies.

To understand the technology questions and challenges associations face, and to help associations make informed, strategic decisions, the ASAE Foundation is partnering with DelCor Technologies and Rockbridge Associates to research what drives technology success and how associations and their members leverage technology in order to create a tool for assessing information technology (IT) maturity and technology readiness within associations. This summary captures the major findings of the first phase of research.

Definition of terms

While *IT maturity* and *technology readiness* are not new terms, this research builds on the understanding of these terms established by DelCor and Rockbridge, respectively.

The concept of IT maturity used in this study was developed from DelCor's IT maturity model. The model assesses how well organizational technology supports the work of the organization. As this research progresses, the maturity model will be updated and enhanced to reflect the findings of the study.

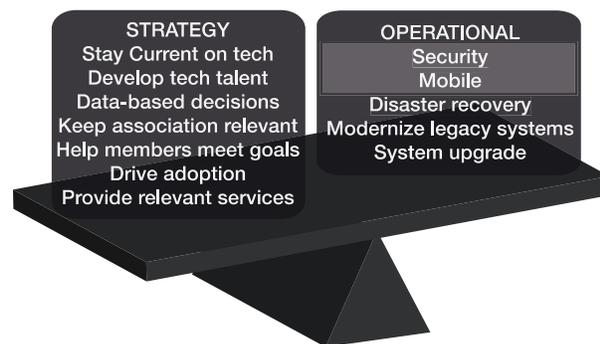
The research is also applying Rockbridge's Technology Readiness Index, which is used to assess a person's propensity to embrace technology, capturing the individual feelings about technology adoption and level of comfort in using technology. Factors that contribute to "techno-readiness" include age and exposure to technology, but techno-readiness can vary widely within the same generation, so age and techno-readiness must be considered separate factors when evaluating appropriate technology.

First Phase Findings

Strong association technology departments are engaged in organizational strategy

IT concerns have broadened beyond internal technological infrastructure to involve association-wide strategic planning in diverse functional areas, including research, membership, and education. IT is being embraced as a crucial part of the strategy development process. Association IT professionals are developing data for association-wide decision making and creating avenues for improved member engagement, all the while maintaining a grasp on the shifting sands of business technology and what their organization needs to do to improve their operational efficiency.

Association IT departments are making a shift to outsource operational tasks like system disaster recovery in order to focus on strategic issues. These strategic areas, including the role of technology in supporting talent development, data-based decision making, and meeting member needs, are generally aligned with the overall organizational strategic focus. Departments remain engaged with security issues and mobile development, as these concerns tend to go hand in hand with strategic priorities.



The organizations that indicate the greatest technology success, particularly those that successfully align technology strategy with organizational strategy, integrated their technology decision-makers within the association's overall management. This representation allows for greater understanding and application of the ways technology can deliver on the association's goals and meet member needs.

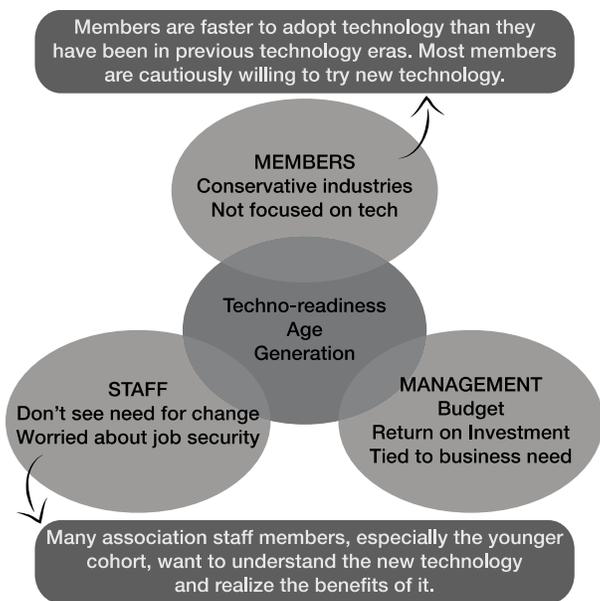
Most organizations see resistance to technological change in relation to techno-readiness

While technology can provide opportunities for many associations and their members, not all available technologies are the right fit for every association. Despite optimism about the potential impact of new technology, reluctance to embrace strategic technology initiatives persists among management, staff, and membership. Technology professionals interviewed during this first phase of research acknowledged levels of resistance largely depended on individual preferences derived from

personal experiences and interests.

Resistance on the part of an organization’s leadership is often connected to the budget or a desire for guaranteed return on investment. It may fall to the association’s technology leadership to tie the new technology to organizational needs or strategic goals.

The personal nature of this resistance may make it difficult for any action by the association to mediate greater individual comfort with technology. A primary challenge for associations is ensuring that organizational and membership needs are met despite differing levels of member and staff techno-readiness.

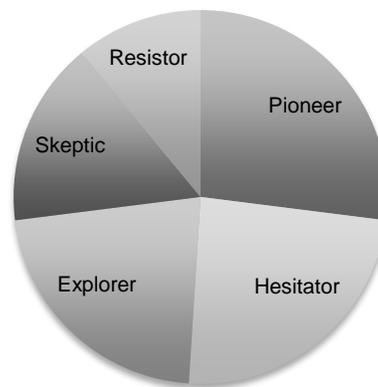


This phase of research also asked research participants to categorize their members through general estimations of members’ feelings about technology and their habits in adopting new technology. The research found that the perceived techno-readiness of interviewees’ members was nearly evenly distributed across the defined levels of techno-readiness (outlined in the graphic below). The member categorization likely varied in relation to the industry, education, and demographics of the membership.

Given the preponderance of technology in modern American culture, it is not surprising that the “Resistor” category – the “laggards” who fear technology and see no benefit in using it – has the smallest representation. But no single category has a substantial edge. Indeed, the findings indicate a perception that the majority of members of participants’ associations express hesitation or discomfort in relation to their own use of technology, however optimistically they express themselves about technology generally.

The gap between technology optimism and comfort with usage indicates that technology education will be an ongoing project for association IT departments, particularly as adoption of new technologies becomes a regular component of strategic initiatives.

Perceived Technology Readiness of Members



Explorer: Optimistic about technology, very innovative, few inhibitions, early adopter

Pioneer: Love/hate relationship; optimistic and innovative, but also uncomfortable using tech and a little worried

Skeptic: Does not care much about technology, either positively or negatively; can take it or leave it

Hesitator: Very optimistic about technology but unlikely to be an early adopter and a little bit uncomfortable and scared

Resistor: True laggard; sees no benefit to technology, does not like to tinker with it, uncomfortable using it, and scared it will do bad things

Next steps

The second phase of the Technology Success Study will consist of case studies, designed to provide a series of in-depth analyses of several associations' technology use. Data will be captured from multiple audiences within each participating association, including IT and other executive leadership, general association staff, and a short survey of the association's members.

The ASAE Foundation is currently seeking volunteers to participate in this phase. Although a high level of commitment is required, participating associations will receive an in-depth analysis of their results. Association executives interested in participating in this research should complete [this form](#).

The next phases of the research will further refine the study's developing definition of IT success and contribute to the creation of a technology success framework. Associations will be able to use this framework to assess their own levels of success with regard to their organizational, staff, and member needs. Final results of this study are expected in the second half of 2016.



ASAE FOUNDATION PROVIDES future-oriented research for the benefit of ASAE members and the association management profession. The Foundation seeks to identify critical trends and effective practices by conducting cutting-edge research no single organization can undertake on its own, while delivering the highest degrees of credibility and impact. The Foundation partners with other organizations in the non-profit arena, as well as leading research and consulting firms, and top colleges and universities to provide the most significant and relevant information on the association industry.

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