

Soliloquy of an Association Executive

By Mark A. Miller, CMP, Edited by Robert C. Harris, CAE

I am an Association Executive.

My members think I have a degree in Sociology, Public Relations, Human Relations, Business, Political Science, Marketing, Graphic Arts, Hotel Management and Marriage and Family Counseling.

I am expected to recognize the voices of all of my members over the phone, and can recite from memory the exact date of their dues renewal and whether they've signed up their spouse or a significant other for the annual banquet.

On demand, I can relate the voting histories of every lawmaker on every voting issue that was, might have been, would have been, could have been or should have been of interest to my members.

The media calls me a Special Interest, but that doesn't make me feel very special.

I am able to find my unemployed and underemployed members higher paying jobs upon request.

I can make a meeting room both warmer and colder at the same time.

I can predict the exact number of people that will attend a banquet, three days before I even set foot inside the meeting facility. I can ensure that the entree I select will be cooked to perfection and pleasing to every member's personal preference.

I will go out of my way to negotiate a \$59.00 rental for a \$45,000 Lincoln Town Car for a 24-hour period --- but will readily accept a \$400.00 rental for an LCD projector and screen.

I accept blame for poor mail delivery, high gas prices, long check-in lines, poor airline service, wrong zip codes, over-regulation of government, under-regulation of government and ethnic conflicts around the globe.

I have enough frequent flyer points to fly around the world, but don't have enough time or money to get off the plane.

I am expected to smile, empathize, sympathize, console, be political, be apolitical (and know when to do which), sing, dance, program the computer, fix the copier and defrost the office refrigerator.

I am an Association Executive; I can do all these things and many more, while still finding time to take every phone call from my members.

Note: The author, Mark Miller, CMP, can be contacted at markamiller@nettally.com or 850/201-2622 in Tallahassee, Florida. He is still an association executive after writing this soliloquy in the 1990s. Bob Harris is a strategic planning facilitator, board and staff trainer. His website is www.nonprofitcenter.com and he can be contacted at bob@rchcae.com or 850/570-6000.

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