



## CASE STUDY: Program Assessment

Association of School Business Officials International

### The Issue

To ensure the [Association of School Business Officials International](#) (ASBO) was deploying program resources efficiently, volunteer leaders and staff sought to evaluate all its programs at once—to know which ones were providing the best return on investment and which ones weren't. Some programs had been around a long time and had “protective status” and others were competing with each other. Others were obviously successful but the next steps for those programs were not as obvious. But the information ASBO had about its programs was mostly anecdotal. In order to effectively evaluate the programs, the board and staff would need more reliable information to guide open and honest conversations. To do that, it was necessary to seek outside, objective, professional assistance—specifically a consultant who did not have a vested interest in the programs.

### Why Tecker International?

The staff and volunteer leaders of ASBO had attended the [CEO Symposium](#) for years and had worked with TI previously on strategic planning. At the CEO Symposiums they had been introduced to TI's philosophy of program evaluation and had seen the TI program evaluation tools recommended for use by associations and felt they were a perfect fit for ASBOs needs.

### What was the TI process?

TI worked with the board and staff to evaluate all of the ASBO programs. This included in depth research to answer a series of questions to analyze the programs in three dimensions:

1. **Program attractiveness:** Factors contributing to judgments about whether the program is attractive to the organization as a basis for current and future resource deployment
2. **Competitive position:** Factors contributing to judgments about whether the organization is currently in a strong position to support the program
3. **Alternative coverage:** The extent to which other organizations can, or may be positioned to serve the same customers through similar programs.

The approach is based on three assumptions:

1. There are more opportunities to respond to member needs, wants and expectations than there are resources to meet those expectations.
2. Given the challenge for resources, the organization generally should not directly duplicate the services of other organizations.

3. Focus is important. Providing mediocre or low quality programs in many areas is inferior to providing higher quality programs in response to a set of focused interests.

A matrix is used to identify the correct program strategy ranging from aggressive divestment (low program attractiveness, weak competitive position and high alternative coverage) to aggressive growth (high program attractiveness, strong competitive position and low alternative coverage). The process didn't end when the assessment was complete. The results of the evaluation were presented to the board with strategies to address the evaluation outcomes.

## What were the outcomes of the program assessment?

There were aggressive divestments of some programs. For example, ASBO had always produced a hard copy membership directory as an issue of its magazine. Creating it was very time intensive and, unfortunately, by the time the information was pulled, laid out, printed and mailed, it was out of date by the time it hit mailboxes. This devoured more time as staff responded to member inquiries whose information was incorrect. Although there was a real-time, on-line version that was completely up to date, it had long been assumed that members would be upset if the print version was discontinued. But, the program assessment pointed out that stopping the print directory would save not only financial but also human resources. The board agreed that the best decision was to discontinue it and ASBO did not receive a single complaint. It was the right decision but the board only felt comfortable making it after reviewing an objective evaluation of the program.

## From the Client:

*The process asks the right questions. It forces you to ask—and answer—the hard questions about your programs. And, at the end of the evaluation, it provides recommendations and leads you to create strategies for moving forward. A consultant can ask the hard questions and challenge long-held assumptions about existing programs.*

*The best part about working with TI was the relationship of trust we had not only our consultant but the entire practice. They know us, we know them and we are comfortable having candid conversations. We can express our concerns, know they are heard and also know that the process will still be objective and fair. TI is very customer-focused before, after and during the sessions. They are a group of people who have the knowledge to back each other up. We know when we need someone, there will always be someone available and they have never let us down.*

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For more information about how TI can help your organization evaluate and prioritize your organization's programs, contact [info@tecker.com](mailto:info@tecker.com).