

AOE Presentations

One of Advancing Organizational Excellence's (AOE) key objectives is to share thought leadership with the industries we serve.

To that end, we frequently serve as speakers on a variety of topics that address key issues and trends that impact your organization. Our team is consistently taking what we learn from working with our clients and developing cutting-edge educational content for marketing and association professionals. These presentations can be tailored to various events from virtual webinars to in-person workshops.

Most presentations lend themselves to a 60 minute format, however, many can be abbreviated to 30 minutes or expanded for a workshop style to 90 or 120 minutes. If there is another topic that interests you, please reach out as we may be able to accommodate should we have the expertise. Please reach out to [Drew Burns](#) to schedule a presentation or discuss opportunities further.

Presentation Topics

(full abstracts on following pages)

- **Beyond the Heir Apparent:** Building resiliency through strategic succession planning
- **Strategic Plans that Actually Work:** Building organizational and tactical roadmaps with staying power
- **Protecting your Brand:** A deep dive into crisis communications
- **Marketing Trends that Move the Needle:** AOE's outlook for technical industries
- **From Scattered Tactics to Strategic Clarity:** Building a marketing strategy that scales
- **Saying What Needs to be Said:** A practical guide to high-stakes conversations
- **Driving Real Engagement:** Social media strategies that work
- **Harnessing Member/Client Data:** Insights to drive strategy
- **Knowing your Audience:** Concrete construction insights that sharpen your strategy
- **Mastering Association Governance:** Insights from the field
- **Building Bridges:** How to lead and succeed in a multi-generational construction team
- **Beyond Adoption:** Turning AI into measurable performance

AOE HAS PRESENTED FOR THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS AND EVENTS:

- American Concrete Institute
- American Concrete Pavement Association
- Great Lakes Cement Promotion Council
- Indiana Association Executives
- Indiana Society of Association Executives
- Indiana Ready Mixed Concrete Association
- Kentucky Concrete Association Fall Convention
- LEARN (Lead, Empower, Aspire Ready Mix Network), a diversity organization in Ohio for the AEC industry
- Michigan Concrete Association
- Michigan Society of Association Executives
- National Council of Structural Engineers Associations
- National Precast Concrete Association
- Ohio Concrete
- Ohio Society of Association Professional
- Society for Marketing Professional Services
- Wisconsin Ready Mixed Concrete Association
- World of Concrete





Beyond the Heir Apparent

Building resiliency through strategic succession planning

When a key executive, board chair, or technical expert steps away, institutional knowledge walks out the door with them. The result is disruption, stakeholder uncertainty and a leadership pipeline that was never built to absorb the impact. This session reframes succession planning not as a contingency measure, but as a core organizational resilience strategy. Drawing on AOE's decades of experience in strategic planning, board relations, operations and workforce development, we present a practical framework for identifying leadership gaps, cultivating talent at every level, and creating transition plans that keep your organization moving forward. Attendees will explore how to move beyond "heir apparent" thinking and build systems that strengthen long-term stability across both staff and volunteer leadership structures.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Assess your organization's current succession risks, including overreliance on key individuals and gaps in your leadership pipeline.
- Apply a structured succession planning framework that aligns with your strategic goals, board governance model, and operational needs.
- Develop strategies for capturing and transferring institutional knowledge before critical transitions occur.
- Identify and cultivate emerging leaders within your staff and volunteer base to ensure long-term organizational continuity.



Strategic Plans that Actually Work

Building organizational and tactical roadmaps with staying power

Many organizations have been through a strategic planning process. They have gathered stakeholders, built consensus and produced a polished document. Then, six months later, the plan sits untouched while day-to-day demands take over. The problem is rarely a lack of ambition. It is a lack of structure, ownership and connection to operational reality. This session cuts through the noise to show you how to build strategic plans that move from paper to practice. Drawing on AOE's deep experience in strategic planning, association management, and member engagement, we walk through a proven framework for developing organizational or tactical plans that align with your mission, reflect stakeholder priorities, and translate directly into accountable action. You will learn how to set measurable goals, assign clear ownership, and build in the review checkpoints that keep momentum alive long after the planning retreat ends.

Whether you are refreshing a long-term organizational strategy or building a focused tactical plan for a specific initiative, this session gives you practical tools to make your next plan one your team will actually use.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the most common reasons strategic plans fail to drive action and how to address them before the planning process begins.
- Apply a structured framework for developing organizational or tactical plans that connect mission, priorities, and measurable outcomes.
- Build stakeholder alignment and clear ownership into your planning process to sustain accountability beyond the initial launch.
- Establish review and adjustment mechanisms that keep your plan responsive to changing member needs and market conditions.



Protecting Your Brand

A deep dive into crisis communications

A product liability claim. A workplace safety incident. A public statement taken out of context. Reputational threats can surface without warning, and the organizations that respond with clarity and confidence are the ones that preserve stakeholder trust. Those that don't often spend months recovering from damage that better preparation could have minimized. This session delivers a practical, in-depth examination of crisis communications as a core organizational competency, not an afterthought. Drawing on AOE's extensive experience in crisis communications, public relations, and association management, presenters walk attendees through a proven framework for identifying vulnerabilities, building response protocols and communicating effectively with members, clients, staff, the public and media under pressure.

Attendees will leave with actionable tools to develop or strengthen their own crisis communications infrastructure, including message development strategies, stakeholder notification sequencing, and guidance for navigating fast-moving scrutiny across traditional and digital channels. This session is designed for association executives, firm leaders, communications managers and anyone responsible for protecting their organization's reputation when it matters most.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the most common crisis communication vulnerabilities facing AEC organizations and assess your current level of preparedness.
- Build a scalable crisis communications framework that includes response protocols, designated roles, and pre-approved messaging structures.
- Apply strategies for communicating with multiple stakeholder groups, including members, clients, staff and media, with consistency and transparency.
- Recognize the role of digital and social media channels in a crisis response and develop tactics to manage your organization's narrative in real time.



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PRESENTATION**



Marketing Trends that Move the Needle

AOE's outlook for technical industries

Marketers face a familiar pressure: do more with less, while the platforms, tools and audience behaviors they rely on keep shifting. AI-generated content is reshaping search visibility. Buyer expectations for digital experiences are rising. Social media algorithms continue to reward new formats that demand new skills. And leadership wants proof that marketing investments are producing results. Knowing which trends to act on and which to ignore is no longer a minor challenge; it is a strategic decision that shapes budget, bandwidth and brand relevance.

This session delivers AOE's curated analysis of the marketing trends that matter most in today's age, drawn from the firm's hands-on experience supporting associations and technical industry firms across marketing, public relations, social media, digital strategy and website development. Presenters cut through the noise to focus on what marketers can realistically implement, prioritize and measure, without requiring enterprise-level resources.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the marketing trends most relevant to associations and firms in technical industries, including shifts in AI-driven content, search behavior and digital engagement.
- Evaluate which emerging platforms and content formats offer the highest return for resource-conscious marketing teams.
- Apply practical strategies to align your marketing activity with buyer expectations and measurable organizational outcomes.
- Assess your current marketing approach against key trend indicators to identify priority areas for adjustment or investment.



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From Scattered Tactics to Strategic Clarity

Building a marketing strategy that scales

Many associations and AEC firms approach marketing reactively: launching campaigns when urgency strikes, adjusting messaging based on internal preferences rather than audience insight and measuring activity instead of outcomes. The result is a fragmented effort that consumes resources without building brand equity or advancing organizational goals. When marketing lacks a strategic foundation, even well-executed tactics fail to compound into meaningful growth. This session introduces a practical framework for building the foundational components of a marketing strategy that is aligned, consistent and built to scale. Drawing on AOE's extensive experience supporting associations and technical industry firms across marketing, public relations, social media, website strategy, and member engagement, presenters walk attendees through the essential elements that connect organizational goals to marketing execution. From defining your value proposition and target audiences to establishing message architecture, channel priorities, and performance benchmarks, this session addresses the building blocks that make every downstream tactic more effective.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the core components of a strategic marketing foundation and assess where your current approach has gaps or misalignment.
- Develop a clear value proposition and message architecture that reflects your organization's mission and resonates with your target audiences.
- Align marketing channel selection and content priorities with measurable business or membership goals.
- Apply a framework for setting performance benchmarks and evaluating marketing effectiveness against organizational outcomes.



Saying What Needs to be Said

A practical guide to high-stakes conversations

Difficult conversations are a constant in the workplace, yet most leaders and teams lack a consistent, confident approach to having them. Whether the issue involves underperformance, organizational change, interpersonal conflict, board dynamics or misaligned stakeholder expectations, the instinct to delay or soften often makes things worse. When tough conversations are avoided or mishandled, trust erodes, accountability weakens, and problems compound. This session gives attendees a structured, practical framework for approaching high-stakes communication with clarity and confidence. Drawing on AOE's deep experience in leadership development, board relations, association management, and organizational training, presenters address the most common barriers to effective communication and deliver tools that work in real-

world situations. Attendees will learn how to prepare for difficult exchanges, manage emotional dynamics, and deliver clear messages that move situations forward rather than stall them.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the communication patterns that cause difficult conversations to fail or escalate, and understand how to address them proactively.
- Apply a structured framework for preparing and delivering high-stakes conversations with clarity, confidence, and respect.
- Develop strategies for managing emotional responses, both your own and others, during tense or sensitive exchanges.
- Adapt communication approaches to different contexts, including performance discussions, conflict resolution, board relations, and change management.



Driving Real Engagement

Social media strategies that work

Many organizations face a familiar challenge: investing time and resources into social media content that fails to cut through the noise. Platforms evolve, algorithms shift and the tactics that worked last year may now be working against you. For associations and firms in architecture, engineering and construction, the gap between posting consistently and posting effectively is growing wider, and the cost of that gap shows up in missed engagement, reduced visibility, and audiences that scroll past content that deserves their attention. This session delivers a practical, up-to-date framework for building social media content that is searchable, engaging, and aligned with your organization's communication goals. Drawing on AOE's hands-on experience in social media marketing, digital content development, and public relations for technical industries, presenters walk through platform-specific strategies that address how algorithms now prioritize content and how audiences actually interact with it. Attendees will explore how to develop content that builds community, drives meaningful engagement, and supports broader marketing objectives across the platforms that matter most to their audience.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Diagnose the gaps in your current social media approach and identify the content types and formats most effective for technical industry audiences.
- Apply platform-specific strategies that align with current algorithm behavior to improve content visibility and organic reach.
- Develop a content planning process that connects social media activity to measurable engagement goals and broader organizational objectives.
- Implement best practices for creating high-quality, searchable content that strengthens brand presence across key digital channels.



Harnessing Client/ Member Data

Insights to drive strategy

Many organizations collect more data than they use. Member surveys go unanalyzed, engagement metrics sit in dashboards no one reviews and decisions that should be informed by research end up driven by assumption or institutional habit. When data collection lacks a clear purpose or a reliable process, the result is information that stakeholders distrust, strategies that miss the mark and resources spent on programs that do not reflect what members or clients actually need. This session equips attendees with a practical approach to transforming raw data into trustworthy, strategic guidance. Drawing on AOE's experience in member engagement, strategic planning, association management and marketing across technical industries, presenters walk through the full data lifecycle: from designing effective collection methods to analyzing results with an eye for bias and translating findings into recommendations that resonate with leadership and inform organizational decisions.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the most common breakdowns in how organizations collect and use member or client data, including gaps, biases and inconsistencies that undermine reliability.
- Apply a structured framework for designing data collection efforts that align with strategic goals and produce actionable, trustworthy results.
- Analyze both quantitative and qualitative data to surface insights that reflect the real needs and priorities of your audience.
- Communicate data findings clearly to leadership and stakeholders in formats that drive informed, confident decision-making.



Knowing Your Audience

Concrete construction insights that sharpen your strategy

Reaching professionals in the concrete construction industry takes more than a strong headline and a well-designed email. Marketers, associations and industry organizations that rely on generic messaging or outdated assumptions often find their communications ignored, their programs underattended and their engagement metrics stalled. The concrete construction audience has distinct motivators, professional identities, and decision-making patterns that differ meaningfully from broader A/E/C segments, and understanding those differences is what separates effective outreach from wasted effort.

This session draws on AOE's decades of direct experience supporting associations, firms, and organizations in the concrete, building, and design industries to offer a grounded, practical picture of this audience. Presenters share observed patterns in how concrete construction professionals consume information, respond to messaging, engage with associations, and make decisions about products, training, and industry participation. Attendees will learn how to apply those insights to strengthen their marketing, communications, member programming, and engagement strategies in ways that reflect how this audience actually thinks and behaves.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Recognize the defining characteristics, professional motivations, and communication preferences of the concrete construction audience based on observed industry behavior.
- Identify where generic messaging strategies fall short for this audience and how to adjust positioning and tone for greater relevance.
- Apply audience insight to improve the targeting, content, and delivery of marketing campaigns, member programming, or stakeholder communications.
- Develop a more informed engagement strategy that reflects the priorities and decision-making patterns of concrete construction professionals.





Mastering Association Governance

Insights from the field

Effective governance is one of the most powerful drivers of association performance, yet it is also one of the most commonly mismanaged. Boards struggle with unclear roles and responsibilities, inconsistent policy application, slow or fragmented decision-making and a persistent disconnect between governance activity and organizational strategy. When these challenges go unaddressed, they create friction at the leadership level that ripples through staff operations, member experience, and long-term mission delivery.

This session draws on AOE's decades of hands-on experience in association management, board relations, strategic planning, and organizational effectiveness to offer a field-tested perspective on what strong governance actually looks like in practice. Attendees will explore the structural and behavioral factors that distinguish high-performing boards from those that stall progress, and will leave with practical tools for clarifying roles, strengthening decision-making processes and aligning board activity with the strategic direction of the organization.

Designed for association executives, board members and governance committee leaders, this session delivers actionable guidance that attendees can apply immediately to improve board performance and organizational outcomes.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the most common governance gaps facing associations, including role ambiguity, policy inconsistency, and misalignment between board priorities and organizational strategy.
- Apply proven frameworks for clarifying board and staff roles, establishing consistent governance practices, and improving decision-making effectiveness.
- Develop strategies for strengthening the working relationship between board leadership and executive staff to support more cohesive, mission-driven governance.
- Assess your organization's current governance structure against established best practices and identify priority areas for improvement.





Building Bridges

How to lead and succeed in a multi-generational construction team

For the first time in history, the construction industry is managing four to five generations simultaneously, from Baby Boomers and Gen X to Millennials, Gen Z and beyond. Each brings distinct communication preferences, expectations around feedback and technology, and different assumptions about hierarchy, collaboration and leadership. When those differences go unaddressed, the result is miscommunication, eroded trust, and operational inefficiencies that affect project timelines, team cohesion and organizational culture. This session delivers a practical framework for turning generational diversity from a source of friction into a competitive advantage. Drawing on AOE's decades of experience supporting teams and organizations across the architecture, engineering, and construction industries, we walk attendees through strategies to understand and adapt to different working styles without stereotyping, build communication plans and matrices that match the right channel to the right message, navigate tough conversations with transparency, empathy and structure, and leverage cross-mentoring to transfer institutional knowledge while empowering younger team members to lead on technology adoption. Real-world scenarios and actionable tools, including communication decision frameworks and feedback loop strategies, make the content immediately applicable to any construction team or firm.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the communication preferences, motivators, and working styles across generations present in today's construction workforce to reduce misunderstanding and build stronger team dynamics.
- Apply communication channel strategies that align with message urgency, complexity, and audience, including when to choose face-to-face conversation over email or digital messaging tools.
- Develop cross-mentoring structures and feedback loops that foster two-way learning, leverage seasoned industry expertise, and equip emerging leaders with tools for sustained collaboration.
- Use leadership techniques grounded in empathy, clarity, and structure to navigate difficult conversations and create a culture of trust across all generational groups.





Beyond Adoption

Turning AI into measurable performance

Artificial intelligence has moved from emerging technology to operational standard across technical industries, yet most organizations are not extracting its full value. The pressure to adopt AI is intense, but widespread adoption has produced a misleading picture of readiness. Organizations that treat AI as a basic writing assistant or simple search utility rather than a strategic collaborator are leaving their most significant opportunities unrealized. This session addresses that gap directly, presenting a field-tested framework drawn from AOE's experience supporting technical industry organizations through the complexities of AI integration. Attendees will explore how to shift from surface-level adoption to habit-driven, high-value use by establishing role-specific best practices, building standardized prompt workflows and governed content pipelines, integrating legal and compliance constraints early in the process, creating internal knowledge-sharing networks and investing in upskilling that builds critical thinking alongside technical proficiency.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Diagnose the gap between surface-level AI adoption and meaningful integration, identifying the behaviors and habits that separate basic usage from high-value, performance-driven outcomes in technical industries.
- Apply a structured framework for building role-specific AI best practices, including standardized prompt workflows, governed content pipelines and compliance protocols that reduce risk and improve output quality.
- Develop an organizational approach to AI literacy and knowledge sharing by establishing upskilling programs, internal mentorship structures and cross-functional governance practices that build sustained competence.
- Connect AI implementation decisions to measurable business outcomes by evaluating cybersecurity risks, monitoring unauthorized tool use and aligning AI investments with performance metrics that demonstrate concrete organizational impact.

