

## **Making Lemonade with Pandemic Lemons**

“When life gives you lemons, make lemonade,” is a phrase used to promote a positive attitude during adversity. The lemons represent the sourness or difficulties. Making lemonade is turning them into something positive or desirable.

Many executives are making lasting improvements during the pandemic adversity. A discussion among component executives of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), yielded these ideas to make lemonade.

1. **Training** – Stock up on association books you recommend the staff read. Start an impromptu mentoring group for your team. Encourage studying for the CAE or CMP exam next year. There are ample webinars available for continuous learning.
2. **Government Affairs** – Government offices may not be open; don’t let that hinder your advocacy efforts. Use the time to research and update position papers, increase understanding of the PAC, or create a webinar on effective grassroots lobbying for members.
3. **Strategic Plan** – Often the strategic plan is a multi-page typed report. Transform it into an eye-catching brochure that communicates value and demonstrates leadership. Share your visually enhanced strategic direction with members and prospects.
4. **Physical Improvements** – Make enhancements at the association office. While staff are working remotely it is an opportunity to paint walls, clean rugs and install hardware and software.
5. **Value Statement** – Members will be asking about return on investment when dues notices are mailed (“What have you done for me lately?”) Inventory every program and service, identify its worth (ROI), and create a value statement to communicate the efforts of the association during the pandemic.
6. **Sponsorships** – Transform sponsorships lost to event cancellations. Identify evolving needs of sponsors. Design a 2021 sponsor opportunity menu that connects suppliers to members.
7. **Budget** – Recast the budget. Identify new revenue line-items. Adjust the expense savings resulting from meeting overhead and travel. Work with a CPA

to seek stimulus dollars for the association and foundation.

8. **Foundation** – Expand the purpose of the foundation beyond education to address food and housing insecurity, for instance. Collaborate with other foundations to make the greatest impact in the community.
9. **Manuals** – Association manuals support training and sustainability. Take them off the shelf to make enhancements. Through the pandemic many associations have realized there are policies that need to be tweaked. For the operating procedures manual ask staff to document their best practices. To update the policies, read recent board minutes to identify any motions that are intended to be long-lasting policies.
10. **Member Database** – Use this time to check the database for accuracy. If members are working from home, ask if you have permission to acquire and use their home address during the pandemic.
11. **Insurance Review** – Ask your insurance counselor to review policies. The pandemic and other forces may be a need to adjust coverages. Discuss adding cyber-crime and publisher's insurance.
12. **Governance Efficiency** – Nobody can deny the importance of governance being more efficient. Appoint a task force to analyze board size and composition, outcomes, frequency of meetings and the governing documents.

Organizations using time during the pandemic to make lasting improvements will be respected by members while improving operations.

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Note: Bob Harris, CAE, provides free governance tips and tools at [www.nonprofitcenter.com](http://www.nonprofitcenter.com).