

The Value of Trade Associations in a Bear Economy

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The Globalization and Localization Association (GALA) was formed in 2002 during the boom days of the global economy. In its first six years, GALA grew significantly—from its original 15 member companies to almost 300 member companies in 2008. As member companies expanded throughout the world and invested in technology and human resources, and as customers grew their international and localization operations, GALA was viewed as a great networking tool.

But we all know that times have changed. We are tightening our belts and reviewing every expenditure. In GALA's most recent GALA Member Pulse Survey, which was completed in May, 57 percent of respondents said they have experienced a direct impact from the current global financial crisis, with 28 percent reporting no impact, and 15 percent unsure.

Yet scrutinizing budgets does not mean cutting out investments that provide long-term benefit. As one member commented in the GALA survey: "We realize that companies optimizing their resources and investing in development will emerge as winners from the current economic downturn."

In hard times trade associations are even more relevant to the members and industry they serve. We use these times to educate ourselves, retool and build for the future. Generally trade associations offer many resources that members can tap into to get added benefit from their membership. Take, for example, GALA's Webinar Series. In the GALA Member Pulse Survey, member companies were asked about the training and development needs of their employees. Seventy percent of respondents said their employees need training in project management; 67 percent in software and tools. The GALA Webinar Series has offered numerous software and tool demos and training sessions since its inception last year while the number and range of sessions is increasing in response to member needs.

The series also has included educational discussions with industry analysts, sessions with GALA's PR and marketing specialist, and other expert topics including term extraction, the international tag set, XML content lifecycles, and more.

Upcoming topics this year include website localization, vendor management with new technologies, and demon-

strations on major industry tools. All are free to members, making it possible to help train employees without added costs.

In addition to webinars, trade associations often oversee vast reserves of knowledge that can be tapped for training and retooling purposes. One of GALA's main focuses is to be a resource for its members and anyone considering an investment in localization. The association maintains an article database with a wealth of information written by experts. It also provides original content through its quarterly GALA newsletter. In September, GALA will host its first major conference and exposition, GALA 2009: The Language of Business, The Business of Language (<http://www.language-of-business.org/>), with a focus on managing in difficult times and positioning for future growth. All of these opportunities help a company not only train its employees efficiently, but also explore new ideas that may offer new solutions for old problems.

Many trade associations offer opportunities to participate in marketing or public relations activities at a low cost. In the case of GALA there are numerous ways to participate—all costing next to nothing. For example, members are encouraged to provide original content to the GALA newsletter that is sent via email to members, industry influencers and customer prospects. GALA lives on GALA's website, and website statistics have shown that the newsletter is one of the top items accessed by visitors to the site. GALA members also actively participate in the association's industry promotion program, authoring articles and content directed to a broader media audience, designed to demonstrate the value of our industry as a whole. Again, these are inexpensive ways to get the most out of having a membership.



Associations offer forward looking benefits to members during good times. They are often at the core of shaping best practices and standards that can profoundly impact their member companies. They establish best practices and core service values for their industry. They educate the public and they look to better develop market share. Associations are equally important in difficult times when they help member companies partner, share resources, evaluate the market, develop new and timely educational programs, and share specialized market information that is beneficial to all. **AAA**