

# ASSOCIATION

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# VIRTUAL EVENTS

April 2012



## State of the Sector

written by Jeff Cobb and Celisa Steele

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published by Tagoras  
www.tagoras.com  
info@tagoras.com  
800.867.2046

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## Additional Tagoras Reports

### Learning and Technology, LMSes, and Learning 2.0



Based on survey data collected from 375 organizations as well as on interviews with 27 associations and 10 technology and service providers, *Association Learning + Technology: State of the Sector* is a 121-page, comprehensive report on technology-enabled learning in the association sector. Associations serious about launching an e-learning initiative or growing a current online education program won't want to be without it.

Learn more at <http://www.tagoras.com/catalog/association-learning-technology>.

*Association Learning Management Systems* is just what you need if you would like to dramatically reduce the time and costs associated with choosing the right learning management system. We've narrowed the field of LMS providers down to a small group dedicated to serving associations and experienced in meeting association needs. We asked the providers to respond to an extensive questionnaire and provide a demonstration of their system.

Learn more at <http://www.tagoras.com/catalog/association-lms>.



The free *Learning 2.0 for Associations* offers a basic overview of how the rise of the social Web has impacted the way that learning happens and how organizations can begin incorporating social media approaches into their traditional online and offline learning activities.

Learn more at <http://www.tagoras.com/learning20>.

# Association Virtual Events

## The Report

*Association Virtual Events 2012: State of the Sector* represents an ongoing effort to assess the growing role of virtual conferences, trade shows, and other events in the association market and to provide insight into how these events may evolve in the coming years. This report represents a wholesale update of *Association Virtual Conferences 2011: State of the Sector*, published by Tagoras in January 2011.

We renamed the report to better reflect the scope of our research, which covers virtual conferences, trade shows, and business meetings, as well as other multifaceted online events. Additionally, we found, since issuing the previous version of the report, *virtual event*, rather than *virtual conference*, to be the preferred umbrella term for these events.

At the core of this report is a survey of 107 associations conducted in November and December 2011. Respondents included those who have offered digital events and those who have not, and those who have provided valuable data about how they are using digital events, what technologies they employ to deliver them, and the business decisions that inform them.

Neither the size nor the sampling method for the data collected in the survey was sufficient for the results be considered statistically valid. Our goal with the survey was not to draw broad conclusions about virtual events in the sector—we are still too early in the adoption cycle for that—but rather to gather what information we could about the small subset of associations that have offered or plan to offer virtual events. Taken in this light, we feel the data offered here provides significant insights for organizations interested in or planning virtual events.

To supplement the survey data, we have crafted brief case studies to highlight the efforts of some associations. We intentionally selected a diverse range of organizations and virtual events.

In addition, the two authors of this report, Jeff Cobb and Celisa Steele, have each worked in the field of Web-based learning for more than a decade and have worked specifically with associations for the better part of that time. Throughout the report we provide our own analysis of the information collected through the survey and draw on our experience to offer perspectives that may not be readily apparent from the data. Our approach to doing this is relatively conservative, based on our sense that we are still in the early stages of virtual events in the association sector and that broad conclusions must be put forward cautiously.



**Partial data from the online survey is included throughout this report. See the appendix for the full survey results.**

# vir·tu·al e·vent

*noun* \ 'vər-chə-wəl i-'vent \

A virtual event is a Web-based event that replicates many aspects of a traditional place-based conference, membership meeting, or trade show. It may take place on a standalone basis or in conjunction with a place-based conference (i.e., as a “hybrid” event).

Virtual events feature *multiple* sessions (*not* just a single Webinar or Webcast) and may include keynote presentations, training and education workshops, discussion areas, social networking opportunities, exhibit areas for vendors, and various other features. Activities in a virtual event may take place in real time (synchronously), on demand (asynchronously), or some combination of the two.

We asked respondents to the online survey to report on their plans using this definition of a virtual event.



## Online Resource Center Beyond the Report Covers

To supplement this report, we have created an online resource center for virtual events, which can be accessed at <http://www.tagoras.com/resources/virtual-events>.

The online center include resources like the following:

- A list of virtual events vendors, with a concentration on companies that have solid experience serving trade and professional associations
- Our “20 Tips for Successful Virtual Events” that, just as the title says, offers tips to help you make your virtual event a success
- Links to the Web pages or micro-sites for a range of association virtual events to help you see what other organizations are doing
- Links to videos created by associations to help promote their virtual events and educate their prospective attendees



For resources, see  
<http://www.tagoras.com/resources/virtual-events>.



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*Association Learning Management Systems, Association Learning + Technology, and Learning 2.0 for Associations.*



### About the Authors

All the research and writing for this report were done by Tagoras principals Jeff Cobb and Celisa Steele.

#### JEFF COBB

A managing director at Tagoras, Jeff has nearly two decades of experience in the world of marketing, education, and technology. He was cofounder and CEO of Isoph, a leading provider of e-learning technologies and services to associations. He has also served as senior vice president of business development for Quisic, an e-learning partner to top-tier business schools and fortune 500 companies, and as vice president of business development for LearnSomething.

Jeff is an award-winning teacher, author of the highly popular *Learning 2.0 for Associations*, and co-author of *Shift Ed: A Call to Action for Transforming K-12 Education* ([www.shiftedtransformation.com](http://www.shiftedtransformation.com)), published by Corwin. His next book, *Leading the Learning Revolution*, will be published by AMACOM in the summer of 2012. He has served on ASAE's Professional Development Section Council, as well as on the research committee of the eLearning Guild



and the editorial board of *Innovate*, a leading resource on technology and education.

Jeff speaks frequently about the impact of new technologies on business, education, and society in general. More information about his speaking is available on his personal Web site at [www.jeffthomascobb.com](http://www.jeffthomascobb.com).

#### CELISA STEELE

Celisa has led the development of successful online education sites with smaller groups like the Frameworks Institute and the Alliance of Chicago Community Health Services and large national and multinational organizations like the American Red Cross, the American College of Radiology, the Society for Human Resource Management, and WebJunction, an initiative of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Celisa is a managing director at Tagoras, where she serves as editor-in-chief of the company's research publications. She was cofounder and COO of Isoph, one of the leading providers of e-learning services to the nonprofit sector. Prior to Isoph, she worked in creative services at Quisic, a developer of high-end online course content for major universities and Global 2000 companies. Before joining Quisic, Celisa worked in curriculum development for the not-for-profit Family and Children's Resource Program (FCRP), part of the Jordan Institute for Families at the School of Social Work at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

A veteran of the e-learning world, Celisa has served on the research committee of the eLearning Guild and, multiple times, as a judge in Brandon Hall's annual e-learning awards. She currently serves on ASAE's Professional Development Section Council.

Celisa is a published poet ([www.celisasteele.com](http://www.celisasteele.com)).