



**THE  
JOY  
OF  
RESEARCH**

**Membership &  
Marketing Research**

**Georgia Society of  
Association Executives**

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***Lovely Asheville, North Carolina***

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# Overview

- In this session:
  - ◆ We will discuss the reasons why we need to ask questions ... surveys, interviews, focus groups ...
  - ◆ then apply what we learn to deliver greater value
- This entails
  - ◆ How to ask some of the key questions
  - ◆ When and whom to ask
  - ◆ How to analyze and communicate what we learn
  - ◆ We will present/discuss varied examples, mini-case studies of organizations translating 'research into value'

# My Viewpoint/Perspective ...

- My perspective & case studies come from:
  - ◆ Nonprofits: 20-year veteran of federal government, large associations, large charities.
  - ◆ Academic: 2 PhD programs in economics/industrial org. Faculty at Loyola College, instructor at Institute (W & NE).
  - ◆ Service provider: Former marketing agency account director, conducted research studies for 100+ orgs as a consultant.
  - ◆ Marketing & research perspectives:
    - Conducting primary research (quantitative/qualitative)
    - Conducting association audits (marcom, conferences)
    - Data mining
    - Managing marketing campaigns (membership, conferences)

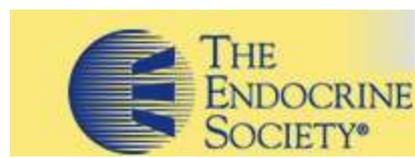




AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION



Nonprofit Federation



# **First, A Word About Why**



# How Research Can Create Value

- Specific Products: Compensation, operations, profit & loss, economic conditions studies.
- Program Support: Documenting common business or professional practices & impediments for advocacy programs, issue identification.
- Decision Support: Helping Boards make right, fact based decisions on program launches, sunsets, dues levels, etc.
- Background: Documenting membership profile, populating demographic database, supporting trend analysis.

# Decisions that Need Data

## Decisions, decisions...

- Staff up/down
- Do more/less
- Do something new/  
drop something old
- Do something different

## Implications *(if done right)*

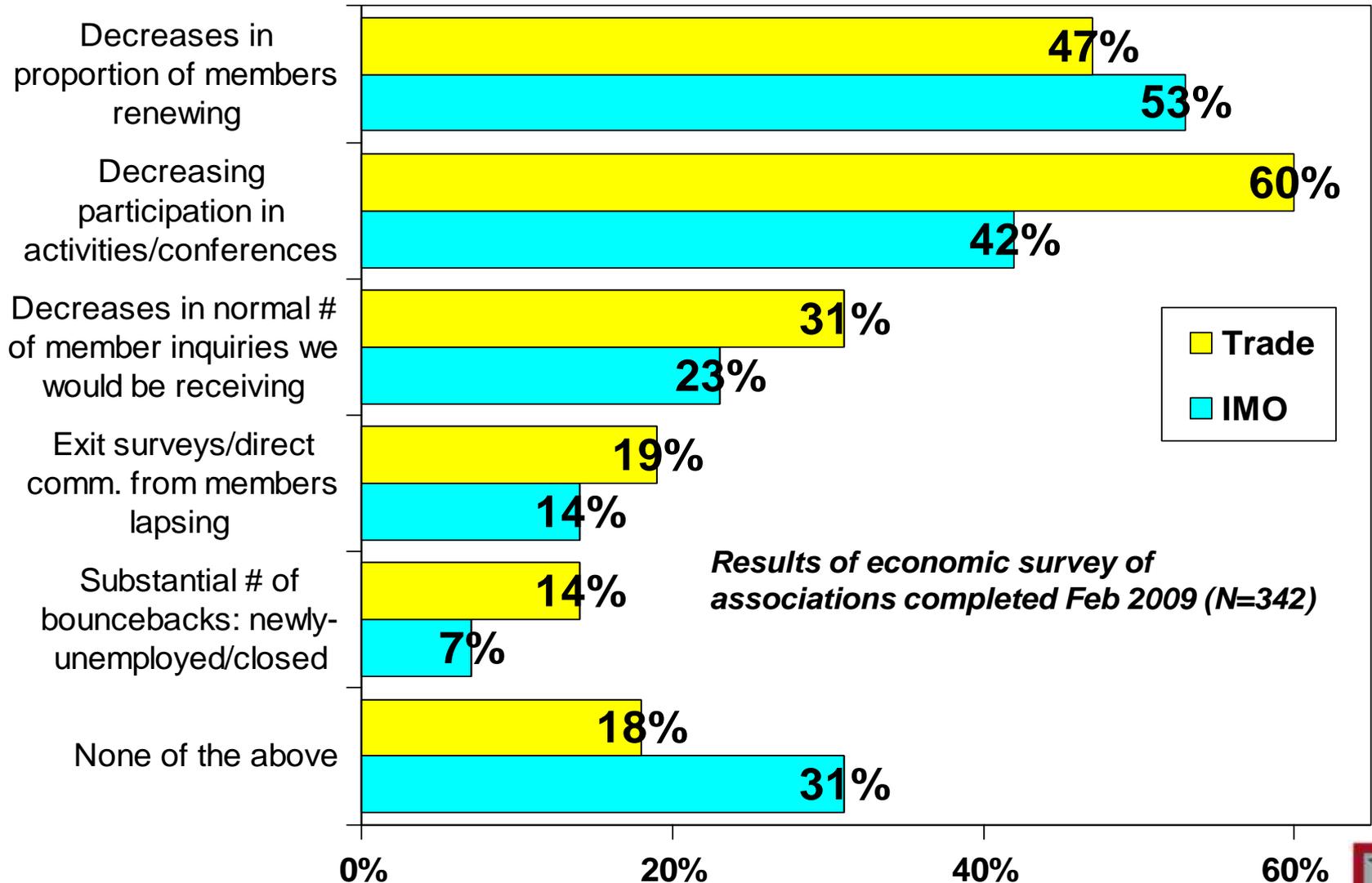
- More effectiveness; better ROI  
Greater value in “bundle”
- Better focus, minimal fallout
- Launch excitement, greater  
relevance & footprint
- Cut budgets/free resources, retool  
the service portfolio
- Demonstrate responsiveness, be  
dynamic in the face of change

# **Many of Us Are at a Crossroads**

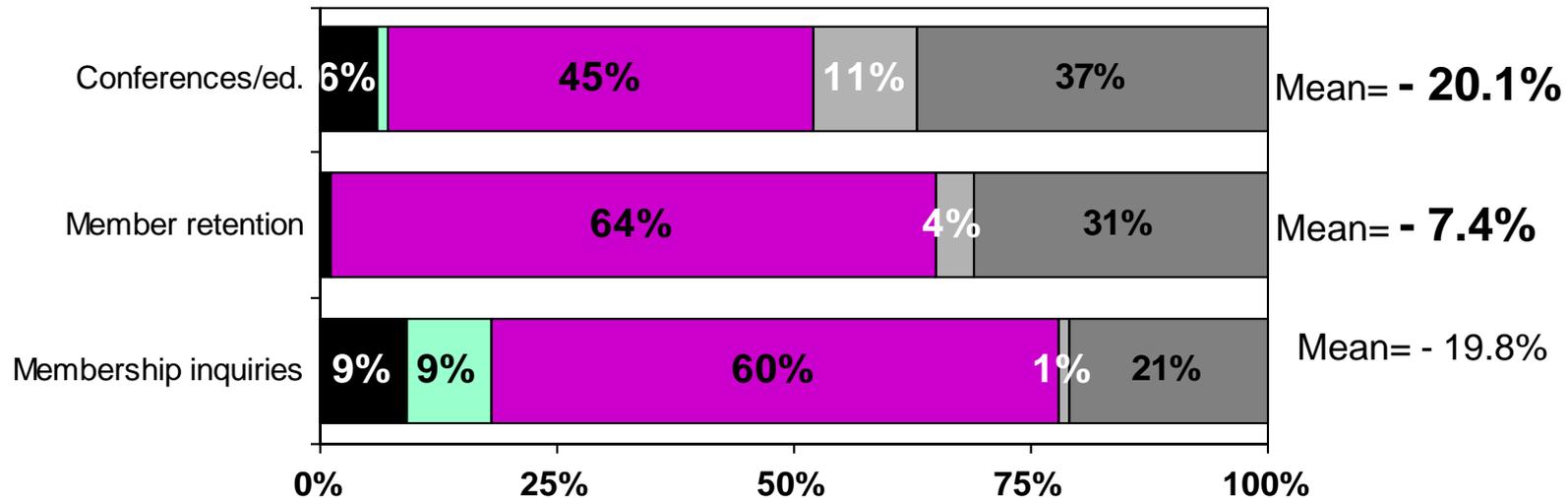
***AKA: "It's the Economy, Stupid"***



# Recent Changes Seen in Membership Due to Economy



# How The Economy Has Hit Us Where It Hurts



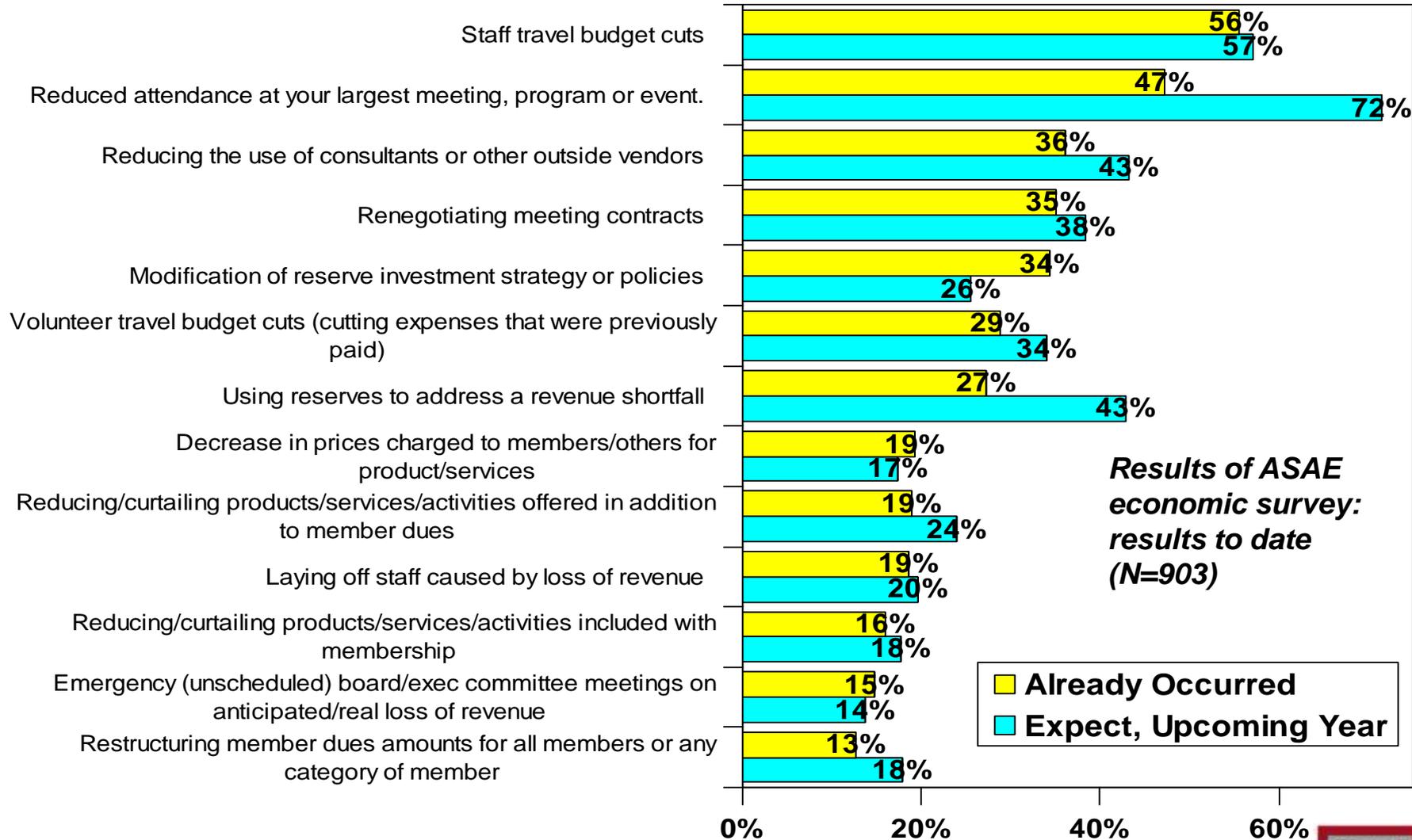
	Membership inquiries	Member retention	Conferences/ed.
■ Significant decrease	21%	31%	37%
■ Moderate decrease	1%	4%	11%
■ Slight decrease	60%	64%	45%
■ About same	9%	0%	1%
■ Increase	9%	1%	6%

Average change in bouncebacks due to unemployed, out of business: ↑ 13%

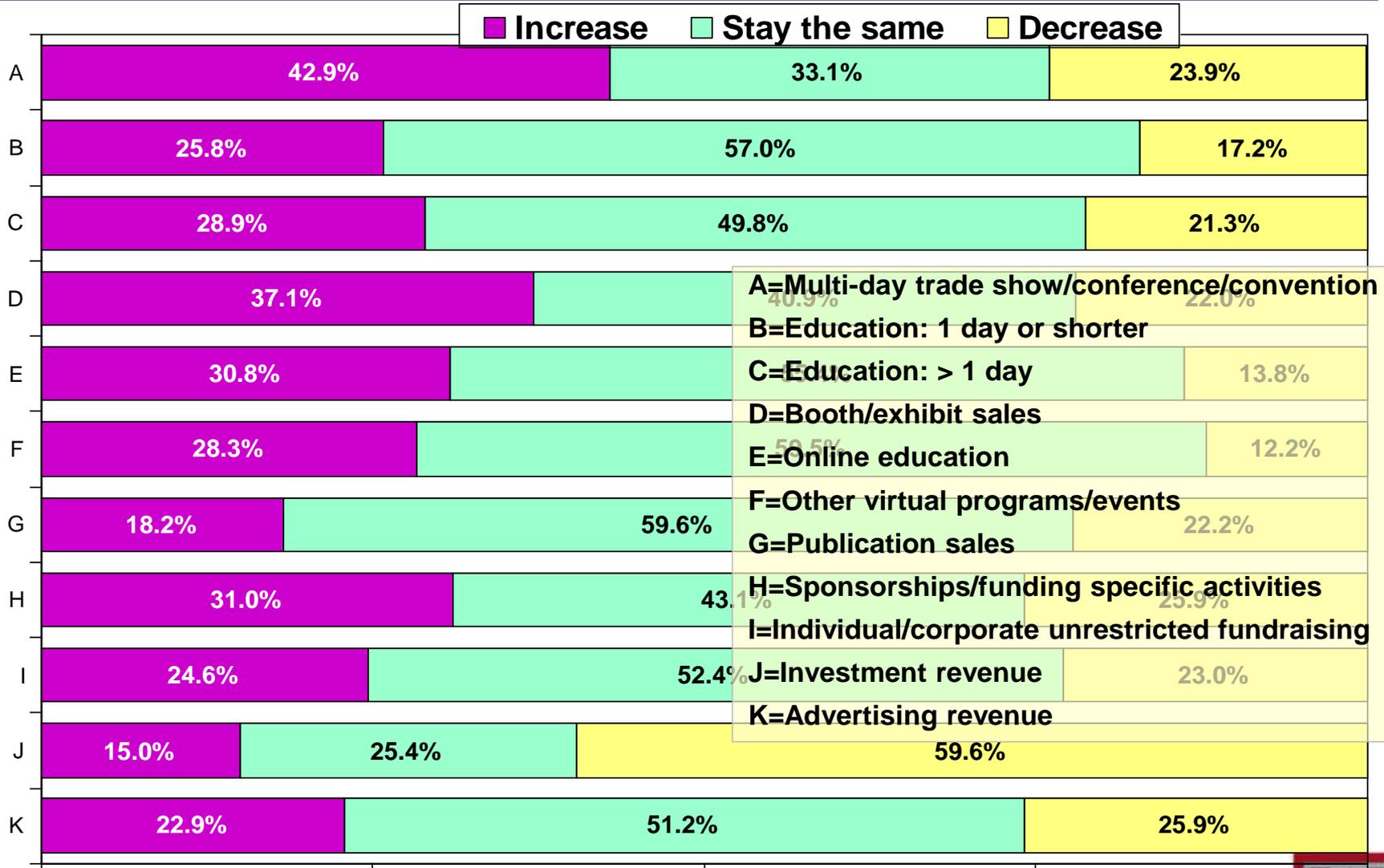
Average change in exit surveys referencing the economy: ↑ 38%



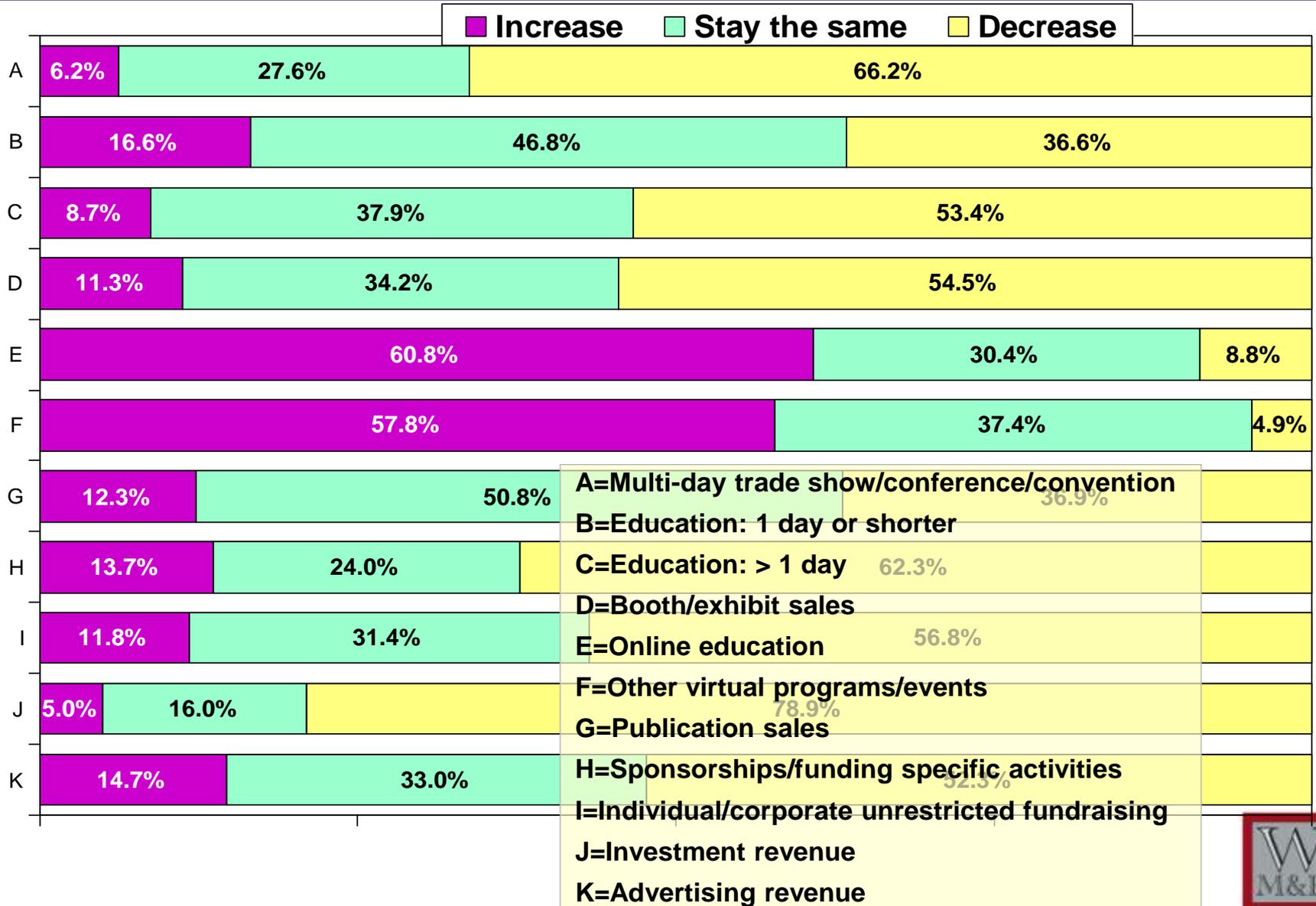
# Expected Changes Driven by Economy, This Year



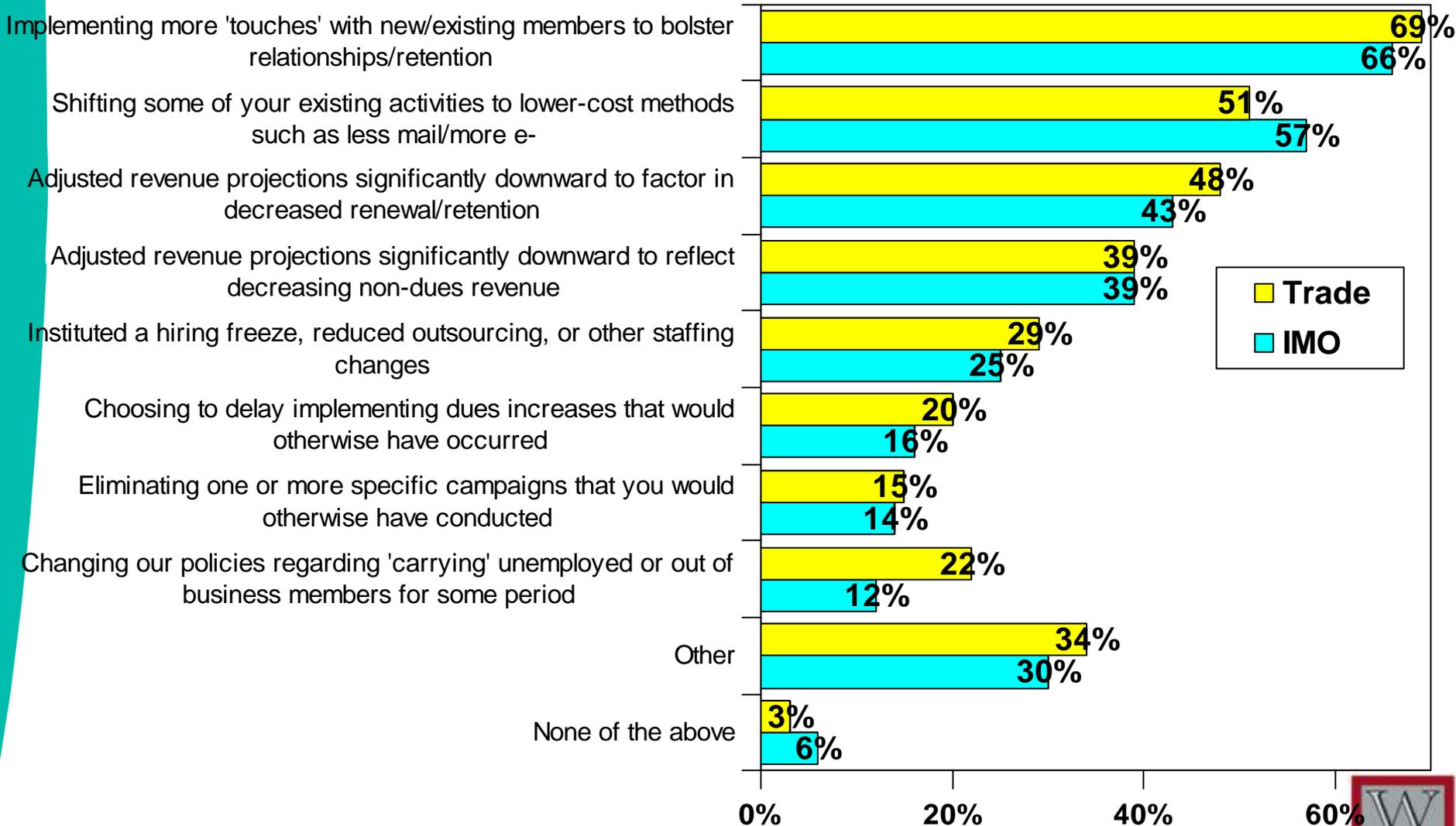
# Specific Areas of Revenue Change, Past Year



# Expected Areas of Change, This Year



# Actions Taken or Planned to Address Lowered Expectations



# How Change Affects the “Association Industry”

- ◆ Economic impact on our members:  
driven by unemployment, expense cuts, policy changes
- ◆ Flows through budgets, with a somewhat delayed reaction
  - Downside: affects non-dues revenue sources (conferences, other education, publications), dues income (lower retention, fewer new/acquisition members)
  - Upsides: Creates greater needs for effective programming; gives us an “excuse” to streamline and re-evaluate
  - Long-term: Possible mergers, ‘rightsizing’ staff & budgets
- ◆ Key roles for your association: more critical now  
Content Aggregator, Mentor, Lead/Employment Clearinghouse
- ◆ Fundamentals: dynamics driven by internet, 2.0, generational trends
  - Increasing importance of networking
  - Value of information may be temporarily lower in a “free media” world
  - Depth/severity of reaction depends on “our” economy



# **Case Studies/Vignettes: How Associations Address Problems with Research**



# Examples of Good Research (*mine, anyway*)

**Membership Audit:** Relocated, 4 years' new E.D., great turnaround.

- Key Questions: What is our image today? How much and how should we spend over time on membership marketing? How should we spend now, given the economy?
- Methods: Stakeholder interviews with staff. Review materials.
- Outcomes: Adjust budget/spending levels. Adjust forecasts of performance. Encourage strong outreach to help announce "we have arrived" to non-members.



**Strategic Planning:** State IMO needs to "data-feed" its strategic plan.

- Issues: Maintain/improve relevance. Grow market penetration. Translate successful tradition of service delivery into greater value.
- Key Questions: Determining key sources of value. Identifying who belongs to national AICPA, local chapters. How do members define expectations on each level?
- Methods: Personal interviews with top leaders, some rank-and-file, all senior staff. Conduct online/print surveys among sample of members & non-members.



# Examples: an SAE and a Trade

**Member Census:** Society merges chapters 5 years ago: assess quality/challenge

- Issues: Sacramento, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco distinct markets  
How are members/vendors served in this environment?
- Key Questions: How to get members to attend? How to build community across the state?
- Methods: Online surveys of member/non-member primary/associate members and personal interviews.
- Outcomes: Survey findings overall, by region, member status and type. Also element of “teach us to fish” that helps ensure future in-house, efficient data collection.



**Readership/Media:** Trade association determines # of members “going digital.”

- Issues: Needs assessment for Board review: several very specific, excellent questions.
- Key Questions: How many have substituted electronic for print professional resources in recent past? How many plan to shift some learning from face to face to distance learning (CD/online)?
- Methods: Online/print surveys of members/non-members. Just a few questions in a much larger study. Modules provide opportunity to measure targeted information.
- Outcomes: Showed that RBMA, others are “training” members away from print, many non-members resistant. Far fewer plan to migrate to newer education formats.



# Examples: Federation & an IMO

**National/Chapter Report Card**: Assess membership, apprenticeship, other programs in 90-chapter federation.

- Issues: Local associations collect dues, dominate the member relationship; repurpose national content. How do we assess/improve value?
- Key Questions: How and why members value each level?
- Methods: Survey local staff/officers, current/never-members: “report card” on services at both levels.
- Outcomes: Long survey with spectacular response. Provides basis for identifying “strong/weak” (i.e. supportive) local assns.



**Conference Planning**: Why non-attendees avoid major event.

- Issues: ACR Annual Scientific Meeting draws well but some never attend.
- Key Questions: Why don't they attend; what can be done to draw them?
- Methods: Identify and invite select group to attend (free travel and registration) who wouldn't have otherwise. Conduct focus group and secondary analysis of past educational needs survey.
- Outcomes: Impediments vary by basic scientists & clinicians; culture/community; new features and copy/messaging.



# Finally, Some “How-to’s”



# Mechanics: Techniques & Methods

- It is easy to do bad research
  - ◆ But it's better than not doing any at all
  - ◆ Learn from your mistakes, and the mistakes of others
- We'll describe the steps ...
  - ◆ and how to avoid mistakes



# Key Steps in Qualitative Research

- Plan**
  - Define objectives: identify unmet information needs, collect dangling hypotheses, poll stakeholders.
- Guide**
  - Draft series of core questions, sub-questions or probes, ground rules and introductory language. Review guide for completeness, reasonableness, flexibility and length. Vary by audience.
- Sample**
  - Identify a pool of appropriate participants. Ensure a mix for interviews, in terms of demographics and engagement profile (leaders and rank-and-file). Ensure homogeneity for focus groups when helpful to encourage candid conversation.
- Recruit**
  - Draft invitations, record confirmations, do reminders/other followup with desirable non-respondents to yield representative group.
- Conduct**
  - At scheduled interview time or focus group time/location, manage the session. Interviews are often 30 minutes, focus groups 90.
- Analyze**
  - Transcribe the sessions if possible, then categorize by primary themes, pull call-out quotes. Seek to explain some findings in terms of demographics, other causal factors.
- Report**
  - Write a report/presentation that summarizes overall findings including additional questions that inevitably arise.



# Key Steps in Surveying

- Plan**
  - Define objectives: identify unmet information needs, collect dangling hypotheses, poll stakeholders.
- Draft**
  - Hire or assign task: write questions and response items, compile and prioritize vis a vis final objectives.
- Design**
  - Once reviewed, select software, convert questions to its format.
- Pre-test**
  - Draft invitation and reminder language, and administer with small, randomly-selected group selected from your sample or census.
- Administer**
  - Once any appropriate improvements have been made, load address book and transmit personalized invitations and reminders on a set 7-10 day schedule.
- Download**
  - Run some statistics from the survey software, then download all data including closed ended data for coding/cleaning and open-text responses to convert to a document.
- Analyze**
  - Run cross-tabulations on values such as institutional characteristics (size, type), demographics, predicted behaviors, source, satisfaction level & related attitudes.
- Report**
  - Write a report that summarizes overall findings, discusses meaningful differences by segment, embeds graphics, categorized comments and cross-tabulations.



# Keeping Surveys Simple

## Use good online tool

Supplement it with other info sources:

- Mail surveys (audience coverage)
- AMS data-mining
- Qualitative research:
  - focus groups
  - interviews

SurveyMonkey - My Surveys - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.surveymonkey.com/MySurveys.aspx

SurveyMonkey.com because knowledge is everything

Logged in as "info@kwhorton.com" Log Off

Home Create Survey My Surveys Address Book My Account Help Center

Current Folder: -- View All Surveys -- Manage Folders Title Search: Search

Survey Title [sort]	Created [sort]	Modified [sort]	Design	Collect	Analyze [sort]	Clear	Delete
CLARB Candidates Final	Tue, 1/13/09 8:09 AM	7 hours ago			305		
CLARB Council Record Holders final	Tue, 1/13/09 8:23 AM	7 hours ago			618		
CLARB MBE	Wed, 12/24/08 8:16 AM	11 hours ago			47		
CLARB Candidates	Wed, 12/24/08 8:42 AM	2 days ago			23		
Short Survey	Wed, 12/31/08 6:58 AM	2 days ago			343		
CLARB Council Record Holders	Wed, 12/24/08 12:40 PM	6 days ago			10		
2007 Health Benefits Survey	Sun, 12/17/06 6:09 PM	9 days ago			826		
State of the Art Evaluation	Tue, 11/4/08 4:28 AM	59 days ago			21		
IPC Member Survey	Fri, 9/26/08 1:48 PM	92 days ago			162		
IPC Non-Member Survey	Fri, 9/26/08 2:14 PM	97 days ago			93		

Showing survey 1 - 10 of 135

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# Thank You!

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