

OPINIONS

Industry associations

There are hundreds of life-sciences industry associations, if not thousands. The challenge is not finding an association that relates to your speciality, whether that is marketing, research and development, regulatory, etc., but finding a group that fulfills your needs. PharmaVOICE asked: do industry associations do a good job of meeting your criteria for professional growth, education, and networking? If not, how can these organizations better fulfill your needs?

Breadth and depth

I find that industry associations do an excellent job in providing networking, professional continuing education, industry relations, and business-development resources. I can't speak highly enough about the breadth and depth of opportunity that industry associations provide to professionals. There is no better way to expand your business, career, and personal growth than by participating in industry associations.

Lois F. Brand
Manager, Marketing and Sales
 NATIONAL COMMUNITY PHARMACISTS
 ASSOCIATION

Guard against corruption

I think nonprofit, membership-funded industry associations must guard against being corrupted by for-profit organizations that seek to impose their self interests on the missions and activities of the associations that affect the goals of the membership.

Dan Ulrey
President
 MCSI

Sweat equity

I'll offer you a few thoughts about the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association (HBA) and the Drug Information Association. I've been a member of both for years.

PharmaVOICE says: "Read. Think. Participate." At HBA we say: "Get Involved. Get Connected. Get Ahead." In this group, it has been my long experience to encounter plentiful, challenging, rewarding, enlightening, and wonderful opportunities to tear myself from the moorings of skill sets and experience that I have been hired to use for my employers. I've come to appreciate that only when I'm off those moorings can I move into deeper water. As a HBA volunteer, I have been asked to stretch and grow and manage and organize and net-

work in ways that simply don't happen in the workaday world. Too often I've seen companies chronically run people so hard that the last thing workers have energy to do is get outside the day-to-day and learn something new. I believe in honing and practicing the basics to keep them as sharp as second nature. On-the-job work allows me to do that. The HBA has provided me with chances to grow beyond what I'm paid for, and ...better than that, to do it among like-minded professionals in a culture that bakes in a lot of joy in each others' company. What the HBA plans to do better, quite soon, is to offer opportunities for new kinds of affinity groups, perhaps around functions like sales or R&D or working moms or career transitions ... and to work harder to welcome and to help orient professionals who are new to our complex industry. Our membership's male population is growing too. I have always said: "It takes a real man to join the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association." Now I think it only takes a smart man, or woman, to join the HBA.

There is no peer to the Drug Information Association in this industry for sheer quality and variety in educational and conference opportunities. Somehow the DIA manages to stay fresh and engaging even in the most basic training (drug development process, clinical-trial monitoring, regulatory requirements for new products), while also offering a curriculum that stays on the edge of hot topics as our industry moves forward. All this and almost no crass commercialism — a professional's delight. As a workshop chair for the DIA twice (Advanced Applications of Health Care Databases), I've been impressed by the professionalism and level of support from the paid staff of the DIA. They kept me on track when my plate got overfull and applied just the right reminder pressure for me to pull together the volunteer and content aspects of the programs. I'm not in the governing structure of the DIA, but my opinion is that they could serve more professional functions than they do now; perhaps marketing, finance, and sales functions would benefit from the DIA's style of creating basic and advanced courses on subjects the whole industry needs to study.



I've paid my dues in dollars to stay in these two complementary organizations for more than 10 years. ... but it's the "sweat equity" that pays the sweetest rewards.

Anne Camille Maher
Consultant
 HEALTH LEADERS
Cochair for Career Development
 HEALTHCARE BUSINESSWOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

A job well-done

I believe that industry associations do a good job of meeting my criteria for professional growth, education, and networking.

M. Patricia Laster
 GENENTECH INC.

Mixed results

Do industry associations do a good job of meeting my criteria for professional growth, education, and networking?

Professional growth — not really. A more open forum for discussing "dare to be different" ideas that truly push our current way of thinking — one that encourages and rewards people for openly discussing new ideas — would be perfect.

Education — not really. I'd prefer more how-to sessions, as most educational sessions are really top line, great as an overview. The really good details usually are missing.

Networking — yes. This is typically one of the strong points of our pharmaceutical industry associations.

Dana S. Dreves
Senior VP, strategy
 NEWTON GRAVITY SHIFT

Staying current

Since joining the Association of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP) nine years ago, I have seen the organization grow its

membership and service offerings. ACRP has a lot to offer clinical-research professionals who can greatly benefit from both the programs and training. The association is a great way to stay current in an ever-changing field.

Susan C. Ray, MEd, CCRA
Manager, Pharmacogenetics Capabilities
 GLAXOSMITHKLINE

The secret: get involved

Career growth and knowing who to tap to help do a job are just a couple of reasons why the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association and the HMC are outstanding as organizations, but — there is a secret. And that is to get involved. Only through working on committees are more of your dreams realized. That's when you really meet people, get to know who is out there, what resources are available, how other people think, and how things get done. You also get to take on leadership roles that you might not have gotten at your company. The confidence built from these experiences transfers into your own job and positively impacts your performance. Now, talk about outside perspective, and seeing a lot of people from different companies working together, and their respective styles — what role models to learn from — and you're exposed to this (for free) at the HBA. It's these intangibles that also foster career growth. The HBA has been one of the most rewarding and stimulating experiences for me. I am very proud of the days I served as president and encourage all to get involved and make a difference — in your career.

Charlene Prounis
Former President
 HEALTHCARE BUSINESSWOMEN'S ASSOCIATION
President
 ACCEL ADVERTISING

Responsive and evolving

In today's fast-paced world, both associations and professionals have the challenge of recognizing their needs and finding suitable approaches to meeting those needs, on a regular if not constant, basis.

From my experience, I have found that the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association (HBA) has stepped up to this challenge and has afforded women and companies in the pharmaceutical and healthcare industries opportunities to meet their respective needs. For companies, the HBA has offered venues for leadership and diversity, and through HBA Connections, a model program for mentoring.

Through the HBA Woman of the Year, awareness and recognition of the roles and contributions of women in the industry have escalated. In short, the HBA has fulfilled its mission and more, and more professionals are finding that this association aligns with their needs.

But since change is continual, HBA is

finding that it too needs to evolve with changing needs.

Currently, there are two task forces exploring the needs of specific groups and how best to meet them. The Affinity Networking Task Force is assessing how the HBA can help special interest groups, such as those involved in clinical, managed care, or pharmaceutical information technology, better connect with one another and if and how the HBA can support them.

The Newer-to-the-Industry Task Force is looking at ways interested professionals can expedite their individual learning curves and if there are common informational needs the HBA can help meet.

The bottom line is that both associations and professionals need to evolve and be responsive to changing needs to remain contemporary and viable.

Pat Pesanello
Second VP
 HEALTHCARE BUSINESSWOMEN'S ASSOCIATION
Chief knowledge officer
 BUSINESSEDGE SOLUTIONS

More on mentoring ...

Important influences

Three mentors influenced my career — and my life. The first was my aunt. Marian was a copywriter in a cosmetics company. From the time I was small, my aunt, a career woman in a glamorous field, was my role model. Beyond serving as a role model, however, she became my mentor — a position we both relished — when I took my first job in advertising and promotion. Marian not only trained me early in my career, but, when I started my own business, worked freelance as my senior copywriter. For two decades, she provided some of my best

campaigns and headlines, brainstormed about strategies and directions, edited my work — making minor refinements or ruthless cuts.

My second mentor was a copywriter in an outside agency. Overwhelmed with an enormous project, I sought the help of an outside group, whose chief copywriter was my key contact. During our work together, he offered a critique of one of my brochures: "The good news," he said, "is you can write. The bad news: there's too much puff." So he — and I — set about building my foundation in marketing, reinforcing the concepts of what good marketing is all about.

While not a mentor in the traditional sense, the third important influence on my career was a top-level-executive boss who hired me to supervise the advertising and promotion department of a major publishing house and then left me alone to do just that.

Those of us who have found mentors are blessed — but it's a two-way street. Mentors speed the way, but success also requires pupils with initiative, motivation, and a hunger to learn and to be the best. And, like my own mentors, I now teach others, taking pride in seeing them grow in their careers, teaching them about good writing, how to edit their own work, and the questions to ask in marketing a product.

Julie A. Laitin
President
 JULIE A. LAITIN ENTERPRISES INC.

What's Your Opinion?

NECESSARY REVIEW

The Food and Drug Administration announced plans in April to withdraw 84 old proposed actions and rules that were never finalized and that are no longer public health priorities. Most of these proposals originally were made before 1997, and none has ever been in effect. This step will clarify the status of old projects, simplify and streamline the agency's rule-making process, and focus efforts on relevant pending proposals.

PharmaVOICE wants to know what actions and rules would have the FDA review as a way to improve the promotion, development, and review of pharmaceutical products?

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?
 Please e-mail your comments to
feedback@pharmavoices.com.

