

Association Management Companies in Europe

*Exploring the world of local
association management – April-December 2013*

(Version 2 – update June 2014)

2MPACT
Empowering Associations

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The Idea

Being the first and only Belgian Association Management Company (AMC) working for local Belgian trade associations and professional societies, the idea grew to explore how local AMC's in other European countries were doing 'their business' towards local associations.

Looking at and learning from the US-approach towards association management was very inspiring, as were the intensive contacts with Brussels based AMC's working for International and European associations in Brussels. Nevertheless, it remained challenging to translate the big numbers of big associations, the complexity of international and European associations and foremost the overall professionalism in their approach, considering that the Belgian association environment consists of some 600 organizations, of which only 1 in 2 has staff, all together approximately 3000 association professionals. In short, a different world.

Therefore, it seemed more appropriate to have a look at AMC's working for local associations. Earlier contacts with some Dutch AMC's learned that their business model and especially 'scale' was easier to compare with. Hence, the idea to explore the European scene and if possible bring them together at a meeting in Brussels.

The Preparation

We started out with some intensive desktop research which resulted in a list of about 60 potential companies. All contacts can be found in Appendix 1.

We reached out by several emails, asking about their 'business' and potential interest in meeting colleagues. These were the questions we asked:

- What is the business model behind your AMC?
- How do you convince associations to pay for your services, whereas they can do it themselves? How do you grow your business?
- What kind of services and products does your AMC provide in answer to the needs of trade associations and professional societies on a local level?
- How do you market them to associations?
- What are the best practices and what are the pitfalls that you have encountered or experienced?
- What lessons can be drawn for your colleagues?
- What are your golden tips for your colleagues?
- What is the influence of EU-legislation (and international agreements, standards or trends) on your local associations?

- How are your local clients linked to European or international 'federations'?
- How does your AMC facilitate international and/or European associations that are embedded with you locally ?
- What is the impact of globalization in the sense of having (board) members from multinational and international members?
- How do they cope with local governance principles?

This generated many reactions and led to interesting conversations. Although coming to Brussels was not that evident for many, once we had 10 people confirming their attendance we felt we had to take the next step. This resulted in the organization of the meetup on November 15th in Brussels. We received support from our Dutch colleagues from Atrium in setting up the program and Kellen Europe had the generosity to host the venue at their offices in Brussels.

The program of the event can be found in Appendix 2. We also prepared a small document with some key-information on association management in Europe (Appendix 3).

The Event

We did a blogpost on the event on November 15th in Brussels summarizing some important issues concerning cultural and historical differences in association management practices and overall awareness on association management amongst the attendees from different European member-states.

Original blogpost on TFOA.be : <http://tfoa.wordpress.com/2013/11/18/from-amc-to-ams-and-back-an-eye-opener-for-association-management-professionals>

From AMC to AMS and back – an eye-opener for association professionals

Last week 2Mpact organized* an event in Brussels with representatives of several European countries. What was set out to be a meet-up of AMC's (Association Management Companies) turned out somewhat differently. Although everyone was professionally linked to association management, the companies they belong to mostly were no established AMC's as such. Notwithstanding this, the event resulted in an interesting discussion

and exchange of ideas and best practices on managing and servicing professional societies and trade associations. It definitely shed an eye-opening light on the concept of the AMC as a mature and well-defined business model in the association industry.

Before going further into this, we need to go back to the reason for existence of associations. If not promoting and organizing the sector, they tend to jump in where other organizations fail, or where it is unlikely for individual companies or professionals to play it solo slim. In the United States associations take on a lot of social functions that are not provided by the public authorities (e.g. social security, insurances, loans,...). Together with the advantage of big numbers, resulting in bigger resources, associations are in need of firm management: hence the opportunity for companies with high-level experts to provide a one-stop-shop solution (the so called AMC's). It is an approach that has landed in the Brussels European and International association community and in some countries, like the Netherlands.

A lot of other European countries on the other hand, as we learned from the participants, tend to have a different approach to association management. This is not just the case for those with only recently evolving 'civil societies' (e.g. in former East-European countries); other countries have competing 'mechanisms' or traditions to organize sectors and markets (e.g. the obligatory membership of a Chambre of Commerce in Austria). Finally, specific needs of associations have triggered specialized services within existing companies: e.g. events and PCO's, lobby /advocacy and PA-agencies, CPD and training companies. As became clear, there is a

lot of association management going on, be it more as supporting association management services (AMS) than strategic, full-service association management (AMC).

Nevertheless, when confronted with the extra potential of looking at association management from a clearly defined business model (e.g. the Pyramid-model presented by Tim Van der Rijken of Berenschot) and keeping in mind the unique selling proposition of an AMC as explained by Alfons Westgeest of Kellen Europe, all participants were excited by the insights for their own companies. Not only to get the basics right for their clients, but more importantly to create unique and added value for their own business environments of PCO, PA-agency and so on. And for the AMC's present: they were reassured that association management – AMS or AMC – is facing a promising future.

* supported by Atrium Group and Kellen Europe (who also hosted the event at their offices)

(Marc Mestdagh, 16.11.2013)

The Future



Following the event we started a LinkedIn Group AMSE (Association Management Services Europe) to keep in contact with participants:

“Informal knowledge and experience sharing group for companies and organizations providing association management services to local, European and International trade associations and professional societies. Primarily focusing on AMC’s (Association Management Companies) providing full-service or stand alone specialized services, but also reaching out to companies providing association management services as an extra or complementary service: Professional Congress/Conference Organizers (PCO), Public Affairs / Public Relations agencies, lawyers, communication agencies, technology providers, etcetera.”

Link: <http://www.amseurope.be>

(update v2 – June 2014)

A second meetup, planned during the International and European Associations Congress in April 2014 in Paris, did not take place due to the fact that the congress is not targeted at association management companies (unless they 'sponsor'), but at association executives.

We attended the AMC Institute Global Task Force in May during IMEX Frankfurt and expressed our willingness to work together to plan a meetup during Autumn 2014.

On June 25th, 2014 there was an informal meeting with the AMC GTF in Brussels, where we agreed on sharing our findings (insights and especially our database in appendix 1) in order to accelerate the process and initiatives by the AMC Institute towards the European scene. We again expressed our willingness to support the initiative, not only from a point of view of 2Mpact but as well as from our leading role – as founder, executive officer and AMC – for the Belgian Society of Association Executives.

Appendix 1 – The List

Company	Website
Belgium	
2Mpact	http://www.2mpact.com
B-Mas	http://www.b-mas.be
Kellen Europe	http://www.kelleneurope.com
The Netherlands	
Atrium groep	http://www.atriumgroep.nl
Berenschot	http://www.berenschot.com
HBB Het Branche Bureau	http://www.hetbranchebureau.nl
Lejeune Association Management	http://www.lejeune.nl
Wissenraet - Van Spaendonck	http://www.vanspaendonck-wispa.nl/
Switzerland	
AC-Treuhand AG	http://www.actreu.ch
AMC Schweiz	http://www.amc-schweiz.ch/
AMS Jasper & Co	http://www.amsnet.ch
BEAG	
Dällenbach Ernest	http://wineandspirit.ch
Depierraz	www.depierraz.ch
Frei connect	http://www.freiconnect.ch
Global Alliance	http://www.globalalliancepr.org
Kenes Group	http://www.kenes.com
Nick NPO-Beratung	

NonproCons	http://www.nonprocons.ch
Paragong Group	http://www.paragong.com/
PSP/VSG	http://www.psp-law.ch/
Roosens Verbandsmanagement	http://www.verbandsmanager.ch/
Verbandssekretariate AG	http://www.verbandssekretaere.ch/
Walker management AG	http://www.walker-management.ch/
France	
Colloquium Group	http://www.colloquium-group.com/
Euralia France	http://euralia.eu
Fed-Eco	http://www.fed-eco.org/fedeco/index_Aso.asp
Italy	
AdArte	http://www.adarteventi.com
AIM Group International	http://www.aimgroupinternational.com
Aristea	http://www.aristea.com/index.php/en
CCI- Centro Congressi Internazionale	http://www.congressiefiere.com/index.php/2012-11-06-13-35-15/association-management-e-marketing-associativo
MV Congressi	http://www.mvcongressi.com/
The Office	http://www.theoffice.it
Austria	
Vereint	http://www.vereint.com/
Ireland	
Conference Partners	http://www.conferencepartners.ie/association-management-services.asp
MemberTender	http://www.membertender.com

Denmark	
ICS - International Conference Services	http://www.ics.dk/en/ics-services/association-management
Latvia	
Elit Events Baltic-Lithuanian Tours Ltd	http://www.eliteventsbaletic.com/en/elit_events_baltic.html
ViaConventus	http://www.viaconventus.com/Association_management.html
Czech Republic	
C-In	http://www.c-in.eu/en/services/association-management
Guarant International	http://www.guarant.cz/
Spain	
Tileasa - Kenes - Spain	http://tilesakenes-spain.com/
Portugal	
L&I communications/CPL Events	
Leading	http://www.leading.pt
Romania	
Point public affairs	http://www.pointpa.ro/
Greece	
Frei SA Congress Travel	http://www.frei.gr/pages/en.html
Germany	
CPO Hanser Service	http://www.cpo-hanser.de
Interplan	http://www.interplan.de/
KIT Group	http://www.kit.de

United Kingdom	
AC Forum	http://www.acforum.net/
Administration Services Limited	http://admin.co.uk/
Association Group Management (AGM)	http://www.associationhouse.org.uk/
CJAM	www.cjam.co.uk
Cognition association management solutions	http://www.cognition-am.com/
Kingston Smith Association Management	http://www.ksam.eu/ksamnew
McCullough Moore	http://www.mcculloughmoore.co.uk
NfP Business Services	www.n4pbs.co.uk
Spring Management	http://www.spring-management.co.uk

(Desktopresearch: April-June 2013)

Appendix 2 – The Program

1st European Meet-up for Association Management Companies Brussels, 15.11.2013

Program

10.00 Welcome by **Marc Mestdagh**, initiator

10.10 Round table with the participants, chaired by **Alfons Westgeest** and **Nele Devolder** (Kellen Europe) - interactive discussion on the following topics :

- What is the business model behind your AMC? How do you convince associations to pay for your services, whereas they can do it themselves? How do you grow your business?
- What kind of services and products does your AMC provide in answer to the needs of trade associations and professional societies on a local level? How do you market them to associations?

12.30 Lunch

13.30 Some topics more in detail (interactive discussion)

- Association management: In-house or AMC ? Results from a study by Berenschot (Ice-breaker: Tim)
- Accreditation and e-learning (Ice-breaker: Adeline)
- Association management irt PCO: Integrated PCO services in association management: An option or a rule? (Ice-breaker: Peter)
- Association management irt PA/PR: Is it possible to do the one without the other ? (Ice-breaker: Irina)
- Any other issue....

15.30 Keynote - "Brussels at the heart of associations - insights into the role of International and European associations in Brussels" - **Dani Kolb**, Manager and **Raquel Ponte Costa**, Sr. Consultant Kellen Europe

16.30 Closing

Appendix 3 – The Basics

European/International - located in Brussels (Belgium)

UIA (Union of International Associations) – <http://www.uia.org>

FAIB (Federation of Associations in Belgium) – <http://www.faib.org>

ESAE (European Society of Association Executives) – <http://www.esae.org>

European Countries

BSAE (Belgian Society of Association Executives) (BE) – <http://www.bsae.be>

VPN (Verenigingsprofessionals Nederland) (NL) –
<http://www.verenigingsprofessionals.nl>

CEDAP (Directeurs, Délégués Généraux, Secrétaires Généraux de
Confédérations, Fédérations ou Syndicats Professionnels) (FR) –
<http://www.cedap.asso.fr>

IoFAM (Institute of Association Management) (UK) –
<http://www.iofam.co.uk>

DGVM (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Verbandsmanagement) (GE) -
<http://www.dgvm.de>

AMC Schweiz (Association Management Companies der Schweiz) (CH) –
<http://www.amc-schweiz.ch>

Korazza (Spanish Society of Association Executives) (ES) –
<http://www.korazaejecutivos.com>

About

2Mpact is the leading Belgian Association Management company empowering associations, professional societies and other non-profit organizations both as a full-service Association Management Company and as a strategic association management services provider. With a multidisciplinary staff of 20 we can deliver a broad range of high-level services, amongst which:

- Day-to-day administration and management of the association
- Membership retention, fulfillment and efficient use of member benefits and services
- Communication services: websites, print media, digital newsletters
- Event services: working groups, task forces, educational sessions, conferences
- Strategic advice concerning content, lobby and thought leadership

We are pioneer and innovator in Belgium concerning association management. We found the Belgian Society of Association Executives (<http://www.bsae.be>) and are responsible for the management and the unique BSAE member's magazine Sectorlink. We founded and manage the only Belgian Academy for Association Professionals and we undertook the initiative to bring together in Brussels several locally working association service providers from all over Europe (2013). Finally, we strongly believe in the importance of the international context in Belgium and Brussels. We uphold close relations with several organizations such as ESAE, ASAE, FAIB, Visit Brussels, etc.

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