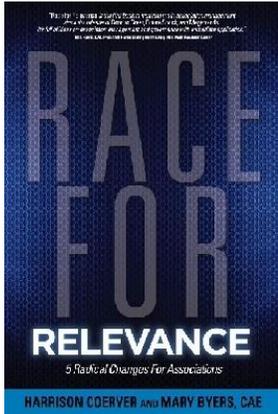




## Who Will Be Your Members in 2020 and Why?

We carry on month after month, year after year, doing the same programs and offering the same benefits to members. It's as if we're on auto-pilot. That allows us to develop consistency and to be very good at what we do. It can also lead to complacency and we may lose sight of who we're serving and how.

Two books that came out last year are rockin' the association industry and I love them both! The authors describe why the membership models we created more than 100 years ago won't be sustainable going forward. I'm curious to hear your feedback on the major points which I've highlighted below.

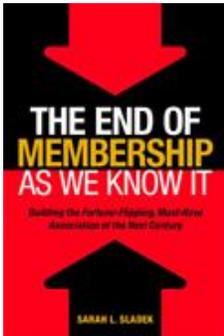


### Race for Relevance

Harrison Coerver and Mary Byers share startling statistics about membership decline in many associations that have been around for a very long time including The Shriners, Parent-teacher Associations, trade associations and chambers of commerce. They discuss trends and their impacts on our members and our organizations, such as:

- **Time Poverty**—Americans are busier than ever working more hours their counterparts in other developed countries. It has led to *work/life conflict* and the consequences of shorter vacations, fast food dinners, and reluctance to volunteer for long-term commitments. Yet, associations continue to operate with a time-intensive model.
- **Value Expectations**—Because of time poverty, people started asking about ROI (what do I get in return for my investment?) “Americans are now used to getting what they want, when they want it and how they want it.” Being a member out of civic duty is waning.
- **Generational Differences**—The average age of association members is between 40-55 years old and the boomers are retiring. Although the Millennials will dominate the workforce over the next decade, will they be attracted to the associations we have now? They are forming their own associations to get more of their needs met in spite of the newer Young Professional groups associations have formed.
- **Technology**—Associations have typically been laggards to embrace the newest technology trends. The Internet changed the way people shop, learn, and connect. Now people can access what they want, when they want it 365/24/7. Facebook and LinkedIn created free memberships and gave people access to people and solutions regardless of geographic location.

Coerver and Byers offer anecdotes for these trends, but I don't think many associations will like them or embrace them. These solutions include streamlined governance with smaller boards, focused niches of members to serve well, scrutinizing programs and benefits annually, and harnessing the power of technology.



## The End of Membership As We Know It

I've had the pleasure of sharing the speaking platform with Sarah and trust me when I say this book will definitely shake some membership professionals to the core! Sarah's specialty is in understanding generational differences. Her book focuses on designing the association that Millennials want to be a part of and although Sladek touches on the same challenges and solutions as Coerver and Byers, she focuses on what's most important to each generation and how associations can best serve them.

### Highlights of the Book for Me

- **Building Online Communities**—Leverage the power of interactive online communities and keep it fresh, encourage engagement, give up control of the content and model the way of the future.
- **Redefine Membership Models** —The old “local membership” is passé so embrace the new emerging models to appeal to a more diverse audience. These new models include a customizable, electronic (web-based only), international, multitier and open or “free” membership. A new opportunity to recruit members if you're doing international trips to China, Ireland, or Australia!
- **Member-Centric**—Recognize that the benefits you offer must appeal to your members and that one size doesn't fit all. Consider the needs and interests of different membership segments and evaluate how well you deliver on these expectations.

The landscape has been changing and if associations don't leverage trends and driving forces, they will become irrelevant and obsolete. If your association ceased to exist, how would your members get their needs met? If you played out that scenario, you may realize that you are not as unique as you thought and that gives you an opportunity to design the association your members need and want.

See our upcoming webinars as we explore ideas and strategies to help you develop a relevant, sustainable and successful association! Check out the schedule at <https://hightperformance.com/current-webinars-and-recordings/>.

*Cathi Hight is president of Hight Performance Group and has over 20 years experience in performance improvement. She helps organizations build sustainable futures, improve processes, increase productivity, and develop staff & member loyalty. Hight Performance Group is the developer of the **Member Retention Kit**. Cathi may be reached at (720) 304-0747 or e-mail: [cathi@hightperformance.com](mailto:cathi@hightperformance.com).*