Training on a Shoestring Budget

By Robert C. Harris, CAE

Small chambers have limited time and money for staff training though education is critical for good member service and effective management. Here are tips for training inside the small chamber.

1. **Job Shadowing**—Have staff learn from each other. Whether you ask the meeting planner to shadow the bookkeeper or the lobbyist, walking in the other person’s shoes for a few hours helps staff relate and interface.

2. **Lunch Series**—Have each staff member prepare a 30-minute presentation on their job responsibilities and priorities. Hold the training lunch once a week until every staff member has made a presentation.

3. **Pop Quiz**—Not exactly a pop quiz, but a page of the most often asked chamber questions. Distribute it and discuss at a staff meeting. Pull it out six months later and see who has forgotten the answers to critical questions.

4. **Cross Training**—Cross train staff to ensure that if one person is out sick or departs others will know enough to be able to continue. Job sharing and rotation has the same benefit. By sharing phone answering, for example, staff learn answers to the most common queries.

5. **Online Education**—Online education saves expenses associated with travel.

6. **Peer Advice and Support**—Visit the ACCE website and log onto the message boards to ask peers questions.

7. **Community College**—Check with local colleges for courses on practical topics such as budgeting, computers and writing skills.

8. **Documentation**—Use the association operating manual, policy manual, board orientation manual and employee handbook as study guides.

9. **Local Seminars**—Check the offerings of your local businesses, Society for Human Resource Management, etc.

Robert C. Harris, CAE, offers leadership training and strategic planning. You can reach him at (850) 570-6000 or bob@RCHCAE.com. He makes association management documents available free at www.nonprofitcenter.com. His latest tools-based management products include the Association Self-Auditing Process® manual and the laminated Board Cheat Sheet.