

Organizational Climate of the Association of Leadership Educators

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Abstract

Without feedback from members and former members, professional organizations run the risk of being stalemated. This study sought to explore perceptions of current and former members of the Association of Leadership Educators (ALE) related to the organization and the climate within the organization. No statistical differences were found in the perceptions of dues paying and non-dues paying members related to the climate of ALE as measured by the Team Climate Inventory (TCI); however, perceptions of both groups were fairly neutral. Open-ended questions were asked to elaborate, enhance, and clarify findings. Five themes emerged as successes achieved by ALE including the members, the ALE annual conference, information and idea sharing, networking, and the *Journal of Leadership Education*. Five themes also emerged as challenges facing the organization including a lack of direction or identity, recruitment and retention issues, lack of cohesion, lack of communication, and lack of participation.

Introduction

As Bolman and Deal (2008) noted:

Organizations need people (for their energy, effort, and talent), and people need organizations (for the many intrinsic and extrinsic rewards they offer), but their respective needs are not always well aligned. When the fit between people and organizations is poor, one or both suffer: individuals may feel neglected or oppressed, and organizations sputter because individuals withdraw their efforts or even work against organizational purposes. Conversely, a good fit benefits both: Individuals find meaningful and satisfying work, and organizations get the talent and energy they need to succeed. (p. 137)

“Every organization, whether it deliberately creates them or not, is governed according to some explicit principles. They are not necessarily benign” (Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, & Smith, 1994, p. 23). They argued that the development and deliberate articulation of an organization’s guiding ideas is a “central function of genuine leadership” (pp. 22-23). However, they also argued that “many attempts to articulate guiding ideas in organizations result in bland ‘motherhood and apple pie’ mission or vision statements” (p. 23). Further they suggested that developing powerful guiding ideas requires both philosophical depth and seeing the process as ongoing. To develop true philosophical depth with respect to deliberately articulating the guiding ideas of the Association of Leadership Educators (ALE), we must first understand how the organization evolved and then try to understand how the organization is perceived today. The ALE was officially formed in 1990, at a seminar in Milwaukee, out of a common desire and felt need to unite individuals pursuing the mission of leadership education. ALE was created to serve leadership educators from many fields by providing a central professional organization where individuals could come together, learn from one another, provide a scholarly base for this new discipline, and be renewed professionally (Walker, 2002).

The initial goals for this group were to “(1) strengthen the competencies of the career professional who works in the area of leadership education, and (2) broaden the overall knowledge base of leadership education” (Walker, 2002, p.13). An emphasis was added to the discussion and presentation of scholarly work to accommodate a growing constituency of practitioners from academia to the fledgling group.

Many changes were made in the first few years as the organization grew in membership. Surveys were distributed to the membership in 1993 (Walker, 2002) to create some understanding of the wants and needs of members, and how the new organization could better serve and strengthen itself for the future. Of special note were items of proposed future direction including formation of goals, proposed target audiences for future recruitment of membership and organizational growth, how to best enhance the professional development of the current membership, and how best to strengthen the organization.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study was based on Social Identity Theory [SIT] (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Based on the work of Tajfel and Turner, Ashforth and Mael (1989) noted, “according to SIT, people tend to classify themselves and others into various social categories, such as organizational membership, religious affiliation, gender, and age cohort” (p. 20). In other words, individuals who categorize themselves as part of an organization identify with and internalize membership in that organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Ashkanasy & Jackson, 2002). Hogg and Terry (2000) shared, “For many people, their professional and/or organizational identity may be more pervasive and important than ascribed identities based on gender, age, ethnicity, race, or nationality” (p. 121).

Ashforth and Mael (1989) studied the role of SIT in organizations and noted:

Albert and Whetten (1985) argued that an organization has an identity to the extent there is a shared understanding of the central, distinctive, and enduring character or essence of the organization among its members. This identity may be reflected in shared values and beliefs, a mission, the structures and processes, organizational climate, and so on. (p. 27)

In line with this argument, organizational climate is a manifestation of SIT. From this perspective, organizational climate is understood from the shared perceptions approach (Anderson & West, 1998). Hellriegel and Slocum (1974) defined organizational climate as “a set of attributes which can be perceived about a particular organization and/or its subsystems, and that may be induced from the way that organization and/or its subsystems deal with their members and environment” (p. 256). Similarly, Reichers and Schneider (1990) defined organizational climate as “the shared perception of ‘the way things are around here.’ More precisely, climate is shared perceptions of organizational policies, practices, and procedures, both formal and informal” (p. 22). Further, “Climate refers to a situation and its link to thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of organizational members” (Denison, 1996, p. 644).

Adopting the shared perceptions approach to climate, Anderson and West (1998) argued that three conditions must be met “for sharedness to even be a possibility” (p. 237):

- Individuals interact on an infrequent basis at minimum.
- One or more common goals exist predisposing individuals toward collective action.
- There is sufficient task interdependence.

However, even if all three conditions are present, a shared climate is not necessarily present. West (1990) developed a four-factor model for team climate that included vision, participative safety, task orientation, and support for innovation. Vision is related to “how clearly defined, shared, attainable, and valued are the team’s objectives and vision” (Anderson & West, 1996, p. 59). Participative safety refers to how active participants are involved in the sharing of ideas and information in a nonthreatening, supportive environment (Anderson & West, 1998). Task orientation describes the collective commitment to excellence in task performance related to the shared vision (Anderson & West, 1996; 1998). They pointed out that support for innovation is

related to the degree of practical support for new ways of doing things as compared to espoused support.

Assessing organizational climate has required the use of quantitative research methods as “generalization across social settings not only was warranted but also was the primary objective of the research” (Denison, 1996, p. 621). West’s (1990) four-factor model of team climate led to the development of a 44-item version of the Team Climate Inventory [TCI] (Anderson & West, 1996) that measured the four factors identified by West (1990) as well as social desirability which is “a check scale which indicated excessive faking and impression management by respondents” (p. 59). The TCI “is used to assess the multidimensional nature of team climate for purposes of description, diagnosis, and remediation of team climate and performance” (Loewen & Loo, 2004, p. 262).

Just as there are a number of definitions of climate, there are a number of definitions for teams within the literature. For example, Senge et al. (1994) defined a team “as any group of people who need each other to accomplish a result” (p. 354). Further, “A ‘team’ might mean a worldwide network of specialists, communicating through electronic mail, telephone, and occasional face-to-face meetings” (p. 355). Some may argue that professional organizations are not teams; however, Bucher and Stelling (1969) stated:

A team is brought together to pursue a supposedly shared goal, to which each of the members is presumed to have a potential contribution. This does not mean that they have common understandings of what their tasks should be, or how the goals should be pursued. Upon further probing, they are also likely to discover that they do not even really share the same goals. (p. 6)

As such, it could also be argued that professional organizations are, in essence, teams and, therefore, assessments of team climate can be valuable when studying professional organizations. Tseng, Liu, and West (2009) noted the concept of team climate has been defined as shared perceptions not only at the work group level, but also at organizational levels. McKim, Rutherford, Torres, and Murphy (2011) suggested that academic professional organizations meet the criteria required for shared climate to exist as outlined by Anderson and West (1998).

According to McKim et al. (2011):

Members interact within and outside of their respective departments and universities. The common affiliation within the association is based on interest in a common goal, and potentially, collective action. Finally, the common interest and affiliation create an interdependence that yields a shared understanding. (p. 88)

Denison (1996) reported the study of climate has typically involved perceptions of organizational members related to observable practices and procedures. “If researchers define climate as a perceptual summation of all the individuals in an organization, they [researchers] should determine the degree of congruency between climate perceptions, minor organizational dimensions, and the appropriateness of these to the environment” (Hellriegel & Slocum, 1974, p.

276). In essence, this quote operationally defines the components of the TCI. As noted by West (2004), all members of a team should complete the TCI for it to be effective as a diagnostic instrument. The TCI has been used successfully in the study of climate within professional organizations (McKim, et al., 2011) and served as the conceptual framework for this study.

Purpose and Research Objectives

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of current (dues-paying) and former (non-dues-paying) members of the Association of Leadership Educators related to the organization and the climate within the organization. Specifically, this study sought to:

- Describe current and former members' perceptions of the organizational climate of the ALE.
- Compare the Team Climate Inventory construct scores of current and former members.
- Explore current and former members' perceptions related to the successes and challenges facing the ALE.

Methods

Population

Data were collected during the spring of 2011 from 88 members or former members of the ALE. Membership, independent of member or former member, was based on an individual at one point paying dues to ALE. The electronic roll of members of the ALE included 183 individuals, of which email addresses were not available or not valid for 20 individuals. Thus, the available population was reduced to 163 members or former members.

The professional position, primary field of interest, frequency of attendance at the annual ALE conference, and membership in other organizations was reported in Table 1 by membership status (current member or former member). On average individuals who self-reported as current ALE members had held membership for slightly more than five years ($M = 5.45$; $SD = 4.23$); however, length of membership ranged greatly from one to 20 years.

Table 1

Professional Characteristics of Current Members (n = 51) and Former Members (n = 31) of the Association of Leadership Educators

Characteristic	Current		Former	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Professional Position				
Graduate Student	3	5.9	3	9.7
Lecturer	1	2.0	2	6.5
Assistant Professor	14	27.5	6	19.4
Associate Professor	7	13.7	6	19.4

Professor	12	23.5	4	12.9
Practitioner	7	13.7	5	16.1
Other	5	9.8	4	12.9
Did not Indicate	2	3.9	1	3.2
Primary Field of Interest				
Community	4	7.8	2	6.5
Higher Education	33	64.7	14	45.2
Military		--	1	3.2
Organizational Development	5	9.8	7	22.6
Youth	4	7.8	3	9.7
Other	4	7.8	3	9.7
Did not Indicate	1	2.0	1	3.2
Attendance at national ALE Conference				
Every year	14	27.5	1	3.2
Most Years	12	23.5	5	16.1
Occasionally	14	27.5	15	48.4
Never	10	19.6	10	32.3
Did not Indicate	1	2.0	--	--
Membership in Other Organizations				
No	2	3.9	24	77.4
Yes	49	96.1	7	22.6
AAAE	19	--	19	--
ILA	14		6	
NACTA	4		5	
Other	20		8	

Instrumentation

A six-section, researcher-developed electronic data collection instrument was constructed following Dillman, Smyth, and Christian's (2009) suggestions for design and format of web-based surveys. The first five sections included 51 statements based on the Team Climate Inventory (TCI) developed by Anderson and West in 1996 and revised in 1999. Respondents used a five-point summated rating scale to reflect levels of agreement for each statement. The sixth section included a series of closed-ended questions to assess ALE members' professional characteristics and a series of open-ended questions to seek elaboration, enhancement, and clarification of the results (i.e., complementarity) (Klenke, 2008).

Face validity of the instrument was assessed by a panel of eight experts. Reliability of the commercially-available TCI instrument was reported in a series of studies (Anderson & West, 1998; West & Anderson, 1992; West & Farr, 1989) and outlined by Anderson and West (1996), who reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the five scales of participative safety, support for innovation, vision, task orientation, social desirability that ranged from .64 to .95 ($N = 717$). Several of the 44 items included in the commercially-available TCI instrument contained multiple-component or *double-barreled* items which required expanding the instrument to 51 single-component competencies. The modified instrument was used in a similar study (McKim

et al., 2011) of an education-based professional organization in 2009 and reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients that ranged from .84 to .90. Using the data collected for this study, post hoc Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for the five constructs and ranged from .82 to .96 ($n = 88$).

Data Collection

Five points of contact were attempted via email to maximize response (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). Before sending the first invitation message, a brief pre-notice was sent to all individuals in the survey population ($N = 163$) by the president of the ALE and noted the president's support for the study. Four personalized email invitations followed the pre-notice at approximately five-day intervals; each appeared to have originated from and was signed by a different ALE board member. Thirteen individuals (8%) who were invited to participate indicated they were not familiar enough with the Association to complete the questionnaire. Additionally, we received email messages from three individuals who declined to participate for unknown reasons.

A final response rate of 53.98% ($n = 88$) was obtained. Procedures for handling non-respondents were followed as outlined as *Method 2* in Lindner, Murphy, and Briers (2001). Days to respond was used as the independent variable in regression equations, where the primary variables of interest (i.e., construct scores) were regressed on the variable days to respond, which yielded no significant results ($p = .24$).

Data Analyses

Research objective one sought to describe ALE members' perceptions of the organizational climate of the ALE. Subjects were asked to respond to 51 statements using a five-point summated rating scale to reflect levels of agreement for each statement. Research objective two used a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to compare the mean construct scores. To address research objective three, a series of open-ended follow up questions were asked to seek elaboration, enhancement, and clarification of the results. These questions asked participants to identify what they liked most about the ALE and what concerns that had about the ALE. Inductive content analysis was used to analyze data from the open-ended questions. "Content analysis is a technique that enables researchers to study human behavior in an indirect way through analysis of their communications" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 472). "Content analysis, then, involves identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying, and labeling the primary patterns in the data" (Patton, 2002, p. 463). Two common methods of interpreting content analysis include the use of frequencies and the percentage and/or proportion of particular occurrences to total occurrences and the use of codes and themes to help organize the content and arrive at a narrative description of the findings (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Both of these methods were used. Data were first reviewed individually to form initial codes from patterned regularities in the data (Creswell, 2007). Data were then aggregated into categories and collapsed into themes through direct interpretation and presented in the findings.

Results

Objective One

The purpose of objective one was to describe current members' and former members' perceptions of the organizational climate of the ALE (see Table 2). Construct scores by rank were the same for both groups; however, current members, on average, possessed higher mean scores than former or former members. By construct median, current or former members neither agreed nor disagreed with items associated with Participative Safety, Support for Innovation, and Social Desirability.

Table 2

Summary of the TCI construct score comparing current members (n = 51) and former members (n = 31)

Construct	Current			Former		
	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>
Participative Safety ¹	3.31	3.36	.601	3.15	3.00	.670
Support for Innovation ¹	3.50	3.60	.618	3.28	3.00	.720
Social Desirability ¹	3.00	2.83	.636	2.96	3.00	.748
Vision ²	3.49	3.70	.637	3.17	3.30	.926
Task Orientation ³	3.02	3.00	.828	2.79	2.88	.935

Notes:

Scale¹: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree.

Scale²: 1 = Not at all; 3 = Somewhat; 5 = Completely

Scale³: 1 = To a very little extent; 3 = To some extent; 5 = To a very great extent.

Objective Two

The purpose of objective two was to compare current and former members' perceptions of the organizational climate of the Association of Leadership Educators, based on the five constructs of the TCI (e.g., participative safety, support for innovation, vision, task orientation, and social desirability). TCI construct scores grand mean served as the dependent variables; membership status (current versus former) served as the independent variable. The alpha level was set a priori at .05. Box's test of equality of covariance was not significant ($p = .06$) which was an indicator that the assumption of equality of covariance was not violated (Field, 2009). There was not a significant effect of membership status on the dependent variables (i.e., the constructs identified in research objective one, $T^2 = .065$, $F(5, 76) = 0.99$, $p = .43$). However, the observed power ($1 - \beta = .335$) did not meet the minimum power cut-off of 0.80, indicating significant differences may not have existed due to chance or error.

Objective Three

Objective three sought to explore current members' and former members' perceptions related to

the positive aspects of and concerns facing the ALE. As outlined by Klenke (2008), respondents were asked a series of open-ended questions to seek elaboration, enhancement, and clarification of the results (Klenke, 2008). A summary of respondents' perceptions of the ALE successes are presented first, followed by respondents' concerns regarding the ALE.

Positive Aspects of ALE

Respondents were asked, "What do you like most about ALE?" Although some themes appeared to slightly overlap, five themes emerged from the responses of 56 members and former members (63.6%) who responded to the open-ended question. The themes described positive aspects of the ALE:

- Members.
- ALE annual conference.
- Information and idea sharing.
- Networking.
- *Journal of Leadership Education*.

The first and most dominant theme was related to the members of ALE. Members and former members most frequently ($n = 26$; 46.4%) identified ALE members as a positive aspect of ALE. Among those respondents, friendliness of members, collegiality, and camaraderie were often used as descriptors. One respondent noted:

"I like the other members! I like the collaborative environment that ALE provides and I LOVE to bring graduate students to the ALE conference because I believe the other members serve as positive mentors for my students."

Another respondent noted:

"The friendliness of the organization. They welcome new members and first-timers. The ALE is a very friendly culture with some highly intelligent, dedicated members."

The ALE annual conference was noted as the second theme. Fifteen respondents (26.8%) provided comments identifying the conference as a positive aspect of the ALE. Respondents noted that the conference provided an opportunity to develop relationships and interact with students and educators. Some responses by participants include "[The annual conference] seems to be the right mix of practitioner and academic focus." And, "I like the small size and the way the conferences are structured."

The third theme focused on information and idea sharing, noted by 14 respondents (25.0%). Respondents noted the availability of resources and members' willingness to share ideas for teaching and practice. A respondent said, "I like that colleagues can come together and hear about a variety of things (both research and practice) going on in the field." Similarly, another respondent noted, "I like the idea that leadership educators can gather and exchange thoughts, ideas, research, etc."

Networking emerged as the fourth theme ($n = 13$, 23.2%) related to positive aspects of the ALE. Respondents praised how ALE provides them an opportunity to meet leadership educators from other schools or organizations. One respondent noted, “I love the opportunity to connect and collaborate with other leadership educators.”

The fifth emergent theme related to positive aspects of the ALE was the *Journal of Leadership Education*. Six respondents (10.7%) noted the Journal as a positive or valuable aspect of the ALE. None of the respondents explained why the Journal was positive or valuable. More specifically, five of the six respondents’ open-ended responses solely noted the Journal without mention of any other positive aspects of the ALE.

Concerns

Fifty-five of the 88 participants (62.5%) provided comments to the open-ended question asking concerns participants had about ALE. Analysis of these responses yielded five themes:

- Lack of direction or identity.
- Recruitment and retention issues.
- Lack of cohesion.
- Lack of communication.
- Lack of participation.

The first theme was related to a lack of direction or identity. Most of the comments related to this concern had to do with aspects of the organization having lost its focus or value statements about the direction of focus. Of the 55 participants who noted concerns related to the ALE, 25 (45.5%) described a lack of direction or identity as a challenge facing the organization. One respondent stated, “Concerned that the organization may be moving in the wrong direction, away from original intent...Need to develop/review original mission, stay focused, stay current, and stay the course.” Other respondents shared comments such as, “Not sure what direction ALE is going. It seems unclear” Similarly, respondents referenced a lack of organizational identity as compared to other organizations. One respondent stated, “Creating a unique identity that is relevant, as compared to [organization]” while another shared, “We have no clear direction about who we are and where we’re going – this is nowhere more evident than in the fact that we have very little retention among conference numbers.” Another respondent shared, “I’ve heard ‘too extension’ then I’ve heard ‘too academic’...there should be room for all!” This concern is directly related to the second major theme.

The second theme identified as a concern about the ALE was recruitment and retention issues. Comments in this theme were typically associated with aspects such as member benefits and the association’s inability to attract new members. Of the 55 participants who noted concerns related to ALE, 21 (38.2%) described a recruitment or retention issue as a challenge facing the organization. With respect to recruitment, one respondent stated, “ALE might not be as attractive to potential members as it could be, thus inhibiting our ability to grow.” With respect to retention

the respondents shared concerns such as “The inability to retain new members. Seems to be a lot of turnover.” And, “Poor communication and retention of members.”

The third theme was the lack of cohesion that exists within the organization. Most of the comments in this theme related to cliques that exist, or appear to exist, divisions within the association, and the existence of in-groups and out-groups. Of the 55 participants who noted concerns related to ALE, 14 (25.5%) described a lack of cohesion as an issue within the organization. Two respondents noted that “It can be cliquish.” And, “It continues to be led by a small group of individuals who make it feel very ‘cliquish.’”

This theme is also directly related to other themes identified as challenges facing ALE based on concerns of members and former members. One respondent stated:

- “Like most organizations, it gets clicky – which is OK, but I personally think if ALE wants to retain membership beyond students and faculty, it needs to take a new direction and look for ALE leadership beyond the university.”
- “There appears to be an ‘inner circle’ of members that presents an invisible barrier to encouraging new member participation.”
- “At times there is a very strong in-group/out-group feel about the organization—especially at the conferences.”

The fourth theme identified as a concern was the lack of communication, both internal and external. Comments within this theme typically related to member to member communication, association to member communication, and member to association communication. Of the 55 participants who noted concerns related to ALE, 10 (18.2%) described a lack of communication as a challenge within the organization. A respondent shared:

- “I never (or at least do not recall) ever seeing a renew notice for my membership and b/c [*sic*] of this I have not received any updated info etc.”

One simply noted:

- “Poor communication.”

And another stated:

“I feel that the only time I get contacted by ALE is when someone has a questionnaire or survey about how the organization is doing. Other times, even though I am a paying member of the organization, I don’t receive any emails notifying me of any activities going on within ALE.”

The last theme that emerged as a concern was a lack of participation. Within this theme, participants provided comments related to both a lack of desire to participate and a lack of

opportunity to participate. Of the 55 participants who noted concerns related to ALE, nine (16.4%) described a lack of participation as an issue facing the organization. One respondent noted, “Members do not seem to be involved in committees or other aspects of the organization as much as they could” while another simply stated, “I need to participate more.”

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Current ALE members perceived the climate of the ALE in a more positive manner than former members, based on observed mean construct scores. However, mean construct scores for both groups were nearest to the central anchor of the scales (e.g., neither agree nor disagree, somewhat, and to some extent) and not statistically different. Therefore, current and former members had similar perceptions of the climate of the ALE.

Because current and former members’ perceptions of the ALE’s climate were not statistically different, ALE’s leadership team should be optimistic. Former members may be willing to pay their dues if they feel welcomed and included by receiving more frequent communication regarding the opportunities offered by the ALE and more welcome in the organization. Further, former members may become more engaged if they receive a clear and unified vision and goals. The results of the study should not be solely focused on the former members. Perhaps more importantly, current members need to be retained, which based on the results of this study, may occur by emphasizing or enhancing the positive organizational aspects including (1) members, (2) the ALE annual conference, (3) information and idea sharing, (4) networking, and (5) the *Journal of Leadership Education*.

The concern regarding a lack of identity may explain why no statistical differences existed between current and former members’ perceptions of the ALE’s climate. Further, the lack of identity or direction for the organization should be an indicator that the ALE’s leadership team should revisit the goals and vision of the organization to present a united and single public message. Communicating the single message may be as important as developing it. Thus, the leadership team should make developing and communicating the goals and vision a priority. Perhaps more importantly, as Senge et al. (1994) noted, developing powerful guiding ideas requires both philosophical depth and seeing the process as ongoing. Therefore, the leadership team should frequently revisit ALE’s guiding ideas to ensure relevancy.

The leadership team should capitalize on the strengths of the ALE by promoting the benefits of membership including opportunities to network and share ideas and information. The leadership team should attempt to reconnect with former members and increase communications with current members by updating the member directory and listserv more frequently. Moreover, the leadership team should engage stakeholders to develop a long-term communications plan.

Based on noted concerns, there are several challenges facing the ALE as it moves into its third decade. Respondents are clearly concerned about the organization’s direction, how to recruit and retain new members, making all members welcome, encouraging participation of all members, and communicating with members more effectively. If these challenges are addressed while emphasizing the positive aspects of the ALE—including the members—member recruitment and

retention may increase because of perceived increase in return on their investment. However, it is important to clarify that members' perception of the return on investment (i.e., dues payment) was beyond the scope of this study; nonetheless, there is an obvious need for further research to investigate members' expectations of dues payment. Lastly, it is recommended that the ALE address the challenges and enhance the successes identified in this study so that members' perception of the ALE's climate becomes more positive as measured by the TCI.

Change accompanies time and growth. The ALE was born out of a common desire and felt need to unite individuals pursuing the mission of leadership education. However, it is not likely the founding members envisioned their organization to reach the size of a corporation. Senge et al. (1994) suggested that retreats were helpful for corporate management teams to write or revise corporate mission and vision statements. These statements are central to establishing a common purpose among members, and given the ALE has in many ways reached the size of a corporation, this suggestion is relevant. It is imperative for members to clearly understand the mission and vision of the organization, and with that its purpose and goals. Unless members understand these, it is unlikely they will be committed to the organization. It is also important for organizations to maximize members' return on their investment. When members pay dues to an organization they expect something in return and it is the organization's responsibility to identify and promote the return (benefits) on the investment (dues).

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