

Association Boards and Technological Harm



The recent global explosion of interest and adoption of so-called “generative AI” and its enabled tools creates complex and serious new questions for association boards. As the growing use of these tools accelerates, boards must be prepared to fulfill their responsibility to safeguard their organizations, stakeholders, and successors from technological harm.

Join fellow VSAE members on **Thursday, November 2** at **The Westin Richmond Hotel**, where Jeff De Cagna will present, “Association Boards and Technological Harm.” After attending this session, participants will be able to explain “generative AI,” its enabled

tools, and other emerging technologies of concern; address the critical risks and harms of emerging technologies and their implications for associations; and help their boards act on the responsibility to safeguard their organizations, stakeholders, and successors from technological harm.

Jeff De Cagna FRSA FASAE, executive advisor for Foresight First LLC in Reston, Virginia, is an association contrarian, foresight practitioner, governing designer, stakeholder/successor advocate, and stewardship catalyst.

The seminar will be in both in-person and virtual formats. A networking reception and luncheon will follow the seminar.

Register at vsae.org/calendar

Why We Are All AI Ethicists Now

AUTHOR'S ATTESTATION: This article was written entirely by Jeff De Cagna FRSA FASAE, a human author, without using generative AI.

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, I attended dozens of webinars and online sessions. This is not an unusual statement for a person whose privileged life made it possible to remain largely sequestered from direct harm during the 2020 lockdown period. Far more unexpected, however, is that I continue to think deeply about (and act on) the words of one webinar presenter. Maria Luciana Axente, serving then (and now) as PWC’s Responsible AI & AI for Good Lead, challenged her audience to accept that we all must be AI ethicists because our futures were on the line as AI development and adoption continued apace, and addressing AI’s ethical problems and questions required the full participation of a genuine diversity of voices and perspectives.

More recent AI developments underscore the prescience of Axente’s call to action. OpenAI’s introduction of ChatGPT late last year fully unleashed generative AI on society and contributed to a rise in public concern about the consequences of AI use. According to a recent report from the Pew Research Center, “52% of Americans say they feel more concerned than excited about the increased use of artificial intelligence.” A notable point in the survey findings is that while the gap between concern and excitement is smaller for young people (ages 18-29) than for people 65 and over, significant AI fears exist across all major demographic groups.

In the association community, there is far more vocal advocacy in support of AI implementation

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DON'T MISS IT!

SEMINAR WITH LUNCH

Thursday, November 2
The Westin Richmond Hotel

CONTENT LEADER
Jeff De Cagna FRSA FASAE

SCHEDULE

Registration 9:00 a.m.
Seminar 9:30–11:00 a.m.
Reception 11:00–11:45 a.m.
Luncheon 11:45 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

REGISTER AT
VSAE.ORG/CALENDAR

UPCOMING EVENTS

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16

Community Service
RABA Build-a-Bike Day
Ruggles Service Corp.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30

Senior Staff SIG Meeting
Virtual

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1

Awards Luncheon
& Silent Auction
Hilton Richmond Hotel
& Spa at Short Pump

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7

Seminar Series
National Society of
Professional Engineers
Alexandria, VA

VIEW UPCOMING EVENTS AT
VSAE.ORG/CALENDAR

and use than intentional efforts to understand and address the ethical questions raised by AI-enabled products and services. No matter how you contribute to the work of associations, your role as AI ethicist makes it crucial to keep three foundational concerns in mind:

AI is deeply flawed—Most advocates choose to focus on generative AI’s efficiency and productivity benefits while relegating ethical considerations to secondary or tertiary status. We cannot simply ignore generative AI’s serious flaws, however. For example, generative AI has a strong tendency to “hallucinate,” which is a polite term for making up things that never happened. But as Naomi Klein asks, “Why call the errors ‘hallucinations’ at all? Why not algorithmic junk? Or glitches?” The answer is simple: hallucination creates an illusory human veneer for generative AI, thereby rendering its flaws more normal and reducing our resistance to its adoption.

AI is the cause of real harms against real people—Generative AI is the source of myriad harms, including ageism and sexism, racism, bias and discrimination, deepfakes and misinformation, and surveillance. While

federal and state laws and regulations may eventually provide essential protections to human beings from problematic AI, they are not yet in place and getting to that point will take considerable time and effort. (AI advocates will make sure of that.) Until such protections are enacted, each one of us must push back on the growing insistence that it is acceptable to widely deploy these concerning technologies in the absence of meaningful and effective ethical safeguards.

AI is a direct threat to human agency—While the actual danger of so-called “doomer” scenarios for artificial general intelligence (AGI) is vastly exaggerated, UMass Boston professor Nir Eiskovits argues, “...the increasingly uncritical embrace of [AI], in a variety of narrow contexts, means the gradual erosion of some of humans’ most important skills. Algorithms are already undermining people’s capacity to make judgments, enjoy serendipitous encounters, and hone critical thinking.” It is up to us to defend our agency every day by devoting our attention to intentional learning about generative AI, so we are well prepared to resist its expanded imposition by fiat.

For those of us leading privileged lives that (mostly) insulate us from the worst of generative AI’s serious ethical risks and harms, acting on Maria Luciana Axente’s 2020 plea must be a moral imperative. In 2023 and beyond, everyone must be an AI ethicist. It is a solemn responsibility we owe to ourselves, our fellow human beings, and the future of humanity.

About the Author



Jeff De Cagna FRSA FASAE, executive advisor for Foresight First LLC in Reston, Virginia, is an association contrarian, foresight practitioner, governing designer, stakeholder and successor advocate, and stewardship catalyst.

Jeff can be reached at jeff@foresightfirst.io, on LinkedIn at jeffonlinkedin.com, or on X (Twitter) @dutyofforesight.

Jeff will be presenting on this topic at the Seminar with Lunch on **Thursday, November 2** at **The Westin Richmond Hotel**. Register at vsae.org/calendar.



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- Omni Richmond Hotel
- Renaissance Portsmouth-Norfolk Waterfront Hotel
- Richmond Region Tourism
- Sheraton Norfolk Waterside
- The Virginian Hotel

Leadership reflections



Terry Monroe, MBA, CAE
VSAE Executive Director

When Failure Is an Option

Marilyn Lowell, wife of Apollo 13 commander Jim Lowell recently passed away at the age of 93. For those old enough to remember the events of 1970, and others who know about Apollo 13’s fateful mission from the 1995 movie, two days after takeoff, an oxygen tank exploded, and the command module began losing power. Ms. Lovell plays a central role in the movie as the wife and mother of four small children, helplessly watching the television news and praying that her husband made it back safely.

As we know now, the story has a happy ending. Thanks to the ingenuity and determination of NASA engineers, the crew returned to earth safely. Their efforts are memorialized in the famous line attributed to NASA Flight Director Gene Kranz, “Failure in not an option”.

In the case of Apollo 13, failure most certainly was not an option. The same is true for other professions (e.g., firefighter, airplane pilot). For most of us, thankfully, our actions don’t result in life and death consequences. Yet too often, we act as if they are, to the point we tend to avoid failure at all costs.

Harvard Business School professor Amy Edmondson presents a different hypothesis: what about embracing failure as part of taking calculated risk? Edmondson refers to this as “intelligent failure” in her new book, *Right Kind of Wrong: The Science of Failing Well*. Edmondson contends that “if you are not regularly failing intelligently, then you probably are not operating at your full potential”. Edmondson identifies four factors that characterize intelligent failure:

The experiment takes place in new territory – think of this as the opposite of the saying, “but we’ve always done it this way.” Remember that everything we provide today to our members and customers is something that once upon a time was new and different. So be ready to try something that breaks new ground, appreciating this also means there’s no direction manual or guidebook to lead you forward.

The initiative presents a credible opportunity to advance toward a desired goal – remember this is about failing intelligently. Your idea must be thought out and intentional and provide a significant reward if successful. Trying things that are pointless just to say you tried them is a waste of time and resources in the short-term and lessens your long-term credibility and stakeholder support (board, staff, members) to try new things in the future.

The experiment is hypothesis-driven, i.e., its informed by present knowledge – while you may not have the playbook for your new idea, you can and must take what knowledge you do have to develop a scientifically-based hypothesis, i.e., your experiment can be tested, measured, and repeated. It’s the difference between cooking using a recipe and cooking by instinct (“a little bit of this, a little bit of that”). Both may work, but it’s the first one that can be duplicated time and again with similar results.

The failure is as small as it can be to produce the desired insights – while some level of failure can be accepted, it should be based on acceptable risk. As Edmondson says, “Nobody wants a bigger failure than necessary.” Pilot projects are a great tool for this, allowing you to test your hypothesis on a smaller scale while keeping risk to acceptable levels.

Thomas Edison, inventor of the light bulb, phonograph, x-ray and more, is credited in total with 1,093 patents. Edison was remarkable for his unending curiosity and drive to make things that were new and different, but what also distinguished him as an inventor was his appreciation that to be successful, one had to be comfortable with failing multiple times. Or as he preferred to put it, “I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.” In your professional and personal journeys, embrace intelligent failure to explore new possibilities, to test what can be, to continually ask the question, “why not” instead of “why.”



Thank You for Making Fall Conference A Success!

Association executives and meeting planners once again converged on October 4 and 5 for the **Fall Conference & Expo**. The Conference opened with Wednesday's workshop, "MemberShift: Why Members Leave Associations and the Strategies Proven to Bring Them Back," led by Sarah Sladek, based on her recent book. Attendees gained a better understanding of what has influenced changes in membership trends and discovered new strategies proven to create cultures of belonging and grow membership.

An evening networking reception at the Hilton followed the workshop. Thursday morning's keynote speaker, Jones Loflin, provided courtesy of **Powell Kohne Associates, LLC**, started the day with a highly engaging presentation, "What To Do About Too Much To Do." Jones recommended we join the circus...at least mentally...to better manage time, and energy, and to explore new opportunities and achieve better results.

Breakout sessions followed with topics including "How to Thrive in Times of Change" presented by Jones Loflin; "No Analyst, No Problem." presented by **Bailey Kasten, CAE** and **Meagan Roloff, CAE**; and "Managing the Mayhem: A Meeting Planner's Perspective" presented by a panel of **Devon Possanza, CMP**, Tarah Warner, MBA, FMP, **Suzanne Welsh-Agnew**, and moderated by **Tiffany Brown**.

The Expo featured over 80 exhibitors drawing attendees to their booths with everything from an Oktoberfest theme featuring beer and pretzels from **Visit Richmond VA** to relaxing chair massages at **Virginia Beach CVB**, and an Operation game from **Visit Fairfax**.

For a second year, the Solutions Zone featured a dedicated area for attendees to meet and learn about products and services that support membership, non-dues revenue, learning, communications, marketing, and events.

Thank you to those who donated to the Richmond Area Bicycling Association Foundation for their Bikes for Kids program, which allows children less fortunate in our community to receive bikes for Christmas. There is still time to donate at raba.org/bikes-for-kids. Rick Eisenman has increased his generous offer this year as he and the FORE Foundation will match 2-for-1 all donations up to \$5,000. **Donations will be accepted until October 31.**

Afternoon sessions included, "Creating Inclusive Employee Lifecycle, Hiring, and Onboarding Processes for your Association," presented by Dawn Tedesco; and "Cultivating Authentic Relationships with Sponsors," presented by Chris Beaman, CAE.

Thank you to our event hosts, partners, and sponsors, as well as all who participated!



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WHAT'S IN STORE FOR '24!



An opportunity for professional Meeting Planners to bond as they share best practices and experience together the newest ideas in event planning. Approximately 6.5 CAE credits.

Meeting Planner Summit
March 21-22
 Delta by Marriott Virginia Beach Bayfront Suites



The entire membership comes together for high-caliber educational sessions, networking at receptions and a banquet, and fun activities in the local area. Approximately 7 CAE credits.

Annual Conference
May 5-7
 Hilton Norfolk The Main



Roundtable and panel discussions to explore the issues unique to owning and working for an Association Management Company. Approximately 4.25 CAE credits.

AMC Summit
July 16
 Omni Richmond Hotel



Top-level decision makers focus in on the current challenges and opportunities in leading their association into the future. Approximately 9 CAE credits.

CEO & Senior Staff Retreat
September 16-17
 Massanutten Resort



Virginia's premiere conference for association executives and meeting planners, offering an Expo with 70+ exhibitors and multiple educational sessions. Approximately 6 CAE credits.

Fall Conference & Expo
October 9-10
 Greater Richmond Convention Center and Hilton Richmond Downtown



VSAE's most popular event! Bid on over 100 donated items, then enjoy a luncheon at which the winners of the Awards of Excellence are recognized.

Awards Luncheon & Silent Auction
December 6
 Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa Short Pump

Mark your calendars and learn more at vsae.org/calendar

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Danville Casino Future Home of Caesars Virginia is the beginning of what is planned to come in late 2024 for Caesars Virginia. Currently nestled in a prime location in Danville, Virginia, Danville Casino Future Home of Caesars Virginia is here to provide locals and the surrounding areas with an unmatched gaming experience. As it currently stands, our temporary facility has 40,000 square feet of gaming space for our guests to indulge in some of their favorite gaming options. Open 24 hours, 7 days a week, Danville Casino Future Home of Caesars Virginia doors are always open welcoming guests with great hospitality and customer service.

While from the outside it appears to be a tent, once inside of the structure most will find that it is a fully operating casino. With just under 800 slot machines, 33 table games, 36 electronic table games, and 12 sports betting kiosks, Danville Casino Future Home of Caesars Virginia is striving to bring the Vegas style gaming and casino experience to the city of Danville. Additionally, we also offer a great dining option at our Three Stacks quick serve restaurant where our guests can enjoy a hot meal. When not in service, as an extension of Three Stacks we recently added a noodle bowl kiosk in our high limit area. With over 400 employees in our temporary facility, we pride ourselves on providing family style service to all our guests.

Since taking its first bet on May 15th of this year, Danville Casino Future Home of Caesars Virginia has been performing very well and we are seeing a ton of foot traffic in and out of the facility. Aside from catering to our delighted guests, we are also making many strides and efforts to give back to the local community as we have done and will continue to do. We previously were able to donate \$100,000 each to two local charities. It is through efforts like this that we want the community of Danville to know that Danville Casino Future Home of Caesars Virginia stand for more than just gaming and truly care about giving back to the local community and provide unwavering support.

The permanent resort, when open, will include a 320-room hotel and a world-class casino gaming floor with over 1,300 slots, 85 live table games, 24 electronic table games, a WSOP™ poker room and a Caesars Sportsbook. In

CAESARS VIRGINIA



addition, the resort will feature a full-service spa, pool, high-quality bars and restaurants, a 2,500-seat state-of-the-art live entertainment theater and 40,000 square feet of meeting and convention space. Upon its completion in 2024, Caesars Virginia will attract visitation from new customers and existing members of the best-in-class Caesars Rewards player loyalty program who reside in the broader Danville region and across the country. Caesars Virginia and Danville Casino are operated by a subsidiary of Caesars Entertainment, Inc. (NASDAQ: CZR).

CONTACT:

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AROUND THE COMMONWEALTH



Valerie O'Brien, Executive Director of the **Virginia Trial Lawyers Association**, has been elected President of the National Association of Trial Lawyer Executives. She has also completed the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) certification from Cornell University.

DUES INCREASE FOR 2024

Renewal notices for 2024 VSAE member dues will be going out in the coming weeks. The Board of Directors has approved a minimal increase for 2024 VSAE Executive memberships. Below are the new membership dues rates, effective January 2, 2024.

EXECUTIVE

1st and 2nd \$360
3rd and more.....\$190
Non-Richmond*\$310
*Located 50+ miles outside of Richmond.

ASSOCIATE

1st and 2nd \$560
3rd and more.....\$295

SEMI-RETIRED

Each \$ 75

VSAE BOARD NOMINATIONS OPEN SOON!

Ready to step forward and make a difference in VSAE and Virginia's association community? The Nominating Committee is accepting applications for the 2024-2025 VSAE Board of Directors **November 9 - December 14**. The board, comprised of 15 directors, helps set the strategic direction for VSAE. The committee is looking for candidates with diverse backgrounds, skills, experiences, and expertise who are committed to giving back to the association community and helping shape the future direction of VSAE.

Board service is open to all VSAE Executive members in good standing who 1) have been an active member of VSAE for at least two years, 2) attend VSAE events regularly, and 3) have served on or chaired a VSAE committee or task force. Board members serve a 2-year term, beginning May 1, and are eligible for re-election to a second 2-year term.



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