



# Strategic Decision Support Services

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## Evolutionary Business Intelligence for Associations

**Association Laboratory Strategic Decision Support Services (SDSS) help you make timely, effective, data-driven decisions through objective, independent research, visual, interactive online management dashboards, and ongoing analysis.**

### Key Benefits

- Improve your ability to recognize threats and take advantage of opportunities through more timely access to information and business analysis
- Improve your ability to communicate business challenges, opportunities and decisions to volunteer leaders through customized reports and visual, interactive dashboards
- Improve your staff optimization with ongoing support by professional analysts
- Improve the quality of your business analysis through independent, objective 3<sup>rd</sup> party input
- Improve your business decisions with independent, statistically validated data

## What Problems Does SDSS Solve?

Associations operate in dynamic business environments where they serve multiple audiences through multiple product lines.

This complex environment generates a huge volume of information that association executives must be collect, understand, assimilate and communicate. Failure to effectively manage this information increases costs and business risk for the association.

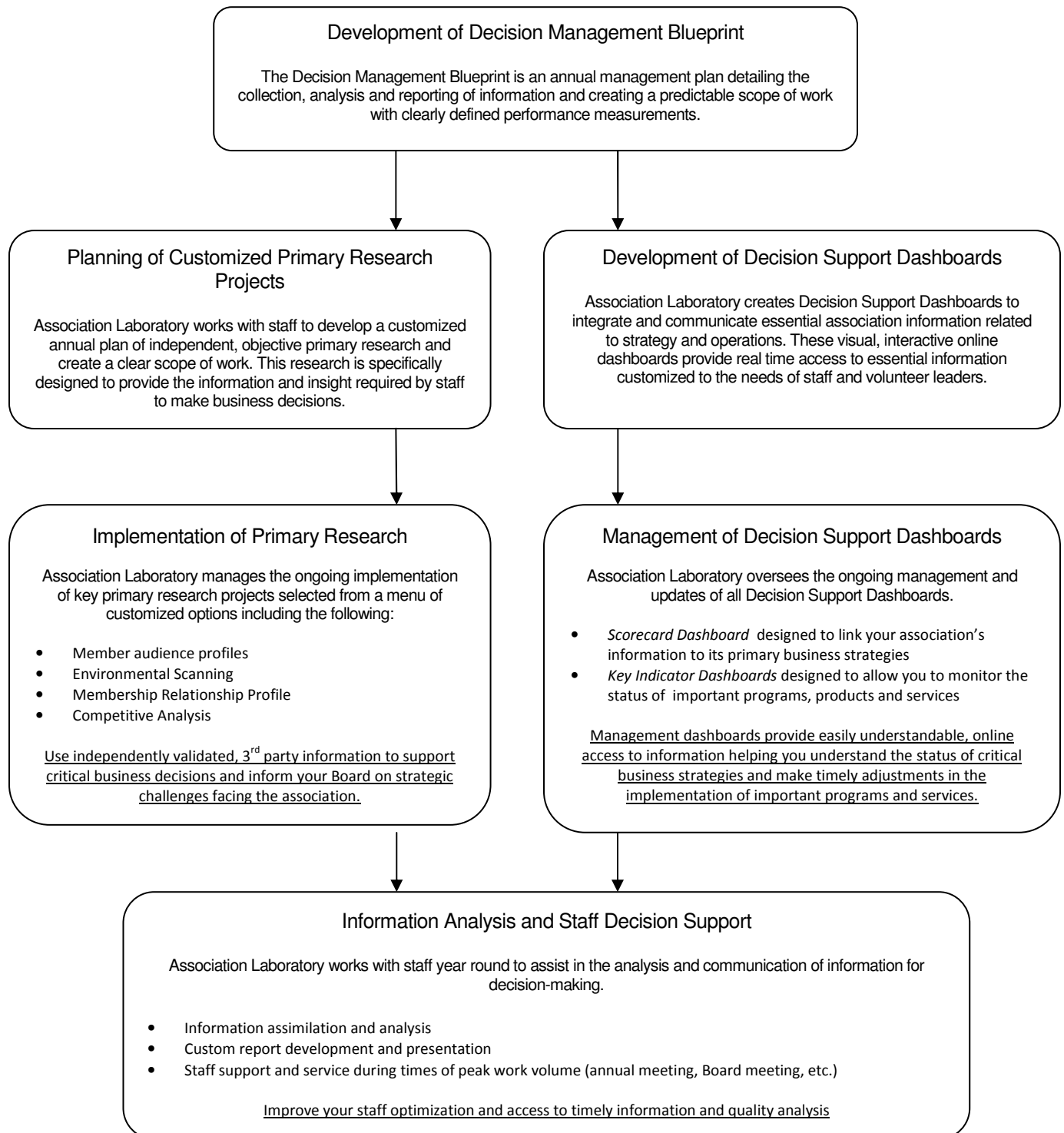
Specific consequences include the following:

1. The association is not perceived as a recognized leader within the industry or profession limiting participation in key industry discussions.
2. The association spends too much time focusing on current tactics and not enough time understanding and discussing the future and the impact of environmental trends on members.
3. Decisions are made without sufficient or valid information increasing the risk of poor business results or missed opportunities.
4. Consensus among volunteer leaders is difficult to achieve because policy is based on opinions, not valid data or in-depth analysis.
5. Staff spends too much time formatting information for reports or searching for information to answer volunteer requests instead of implementing business solutions and serving members.
6. Information and analysis is communicated in a way that is difficult for volunteer leaders and staff to understand and use.
7. Financial resources are wasted on uncoordinated activities not directly linked to the needs of staff and volunteer decision-makers.

The longer your association suffers from these consequences the more difficult it becomes to address these issues and reinvigorate the association's progress towards sustainable growth and industry leadership.

## How does SDSS Solve These Problems?

Association Laboratory Decision Support Services helps associations address these challenges by creating a managed approach to the collection, analysis and communication of association data and primary research initiatives.



## Key Features of Strategic Decision Support Services

- **A comprehensive Decision Management Blueprint creates an association-wide protocol for the collection, analysis and communication of valid information to decision-makers.**

The Decision Management Blueprint outlines the information required by decision-makers to guide Board decisions and diagnose potential challenges facing key programs and services. An approved schedule for the collection, analysis and communication of this information is developed. Finally, a management plan detailing specific tasks, responsibilities and budget is produced.

- **Online decision support dashboards provide visual, easily understandable communication of essential information allowing association leaders to monitor the progress of essential strategies, programs and services.**

Decision Support Dashboards provide online access to information by individual decision makers necessary for successful management of strategy and of distinct products, services or initiatives.

Two distinct customized dashboards are developed for association decision-makers.

- Scorecard Dashboard - this dashboard provides information linking the goals of the association to the strategies being implemented to achieve these goals. This dashboard allows senior staff to monitor the progress of these strategies relative to the association's goals.
- Key Indicator Dashboard - this dashboard provides information on the operations of important association programs, services or other initiatives for use by senior staff to diagnosis potential problems.

Association Laboratory manages the ongoing administration of the dashboards to maintain data quality and integrity, and modify the dashboards based on changes in the association's needs.

- **An annual plan of essential primary research is developed to provide independent, 3<sup>rd</sup> party validated information specific to the needs of the association.**

Association Laboratory creates a plan of primary research activities designed to profile member and customer audiences, assess the external environment, determine membership needs and evaluate competitors.

Association Laboratory manages the development and deployment of all research activities in cooperation with staff including qualitative research, quantitative research and the development and reporting of independent, objective analysis.

- **Ongoing staff support by Association Laboratory consultants improves staff optimization by helping staff with data analysis and reporting.**

Every association has peaks and valleys during their year. For example, prior to a Board meeting or annual meeting association staff must often generate a wide variety of reports. The volume of work makes it difficult to devote the time necessary to interact with volunteer leaders on understanding and using information. Association Laboratory consultants work with association staff to help interpret data, provide customized analysis and reports and support staff communication to volunteer leaders.

## Anticipated Investment in Strategic Decision Support Services

SDSS is a strategic investment that targets associations challenged by the needs of multiple constituencies, a complex product line and highly variable work volume.

Every association has different needs and thus the package of Strategic Decision Support Services will be different for each organization.

SDSS is structured as a retainer relationship through which Association Laboratory becomes a strategic asset of the association with unique, in-depth knowledge of its challenges, opportunities and capabilities.

A sample package of SDSS might include the following:

Activity	Description	Investment	Annual Investment
<b>Decision Management Blueprint</b>	Annual business plan detailing the specific collection, analysis and communication of information; development of initial management dashboards and annual research business plan	\$15,000	One time consulting fee; subsequent updates included
<b>Management Dashboards</b>	Online management and support of management dashboards for 4 decision-makers	\$19,000	Annual investment
<b>Primary Research</b>	2 Distinct Research Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Scanning</li> <li>• Membership Audience Benchmarking</li> </ul>	\$27,000	Annual investment
<b>Analyst Support</b>	Monthly support of staff by Association Laboratory consultants	\$5,000	Annual investment

This sample association would invest \$15,000 for the development of the Decision Management Blueprint outlining the development, analysis and communication of all information and the development of the decision management dashboards.

Annual activities would include the following:

- Support and updates of management dashboards
- Environmental Scanning and trending
- Membership Audience Benchmarking and trending
- Analyst support

An annual investment of \$51,000 would be incurred and be paid as a monthly retainer of \$4,250.

Association Laboratory anticipates the annual investment for the majority of associations including essential research projects; ongoing management dashboards and staff support should range between \$35,000 – 55,000 per year.

## CONCLUSION

Strategic Decision Support Services provide associations with a unique set of benefits designed to help the association go “from good to great”. SDSS represents the next evolution of business intelligence in association management.

Association Laboratory has established a national reputation for excellence in the delivery of consulting services to associations. The respect for the company’s innovation and abilities is evidenced by continued participation as conference speakers, authors in industry publications and service in local and national association leadership positions.

Laboratory Inc. is a nationally recognized association research, strategic planning and management consulting firm specializing in the solution of association management challenges. The company serves a nationwide client base representing some of the nation’s leading trade and professional associations.

Association Laboratory was founded to provide associations with the most sophisticated and comprehensive services. Since 1999 the company has produced a wide variety of consulting products.

SDSS allows associations to benefit from this experience and utilize the company’s research infrastructure to support better decision-making.

**For more information on SDSS or for a customized proposal please contact Phil Puckorius at Association Laboratory Inc. headquarters in Chicago at 312.466.5702 or by email at [ppuckorius@associationlaboratory.com](mailto:ppuckorius@associationlaboratory.com).**