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## WHERE THE WINNERS MEET

The mid-January release of the latest report from The William E. Smith Institute for Association Research received considerable attention in the trade press. The study, titled "Where the Winners Meet: Why Happier, More Successful People Gravitate Toward Associations," found that, on average, association members earn higher salaries, like their jobs more and are happier people than those who do not join associations. While the findings initially seem to read like a member recruitment brochure, the report actually interprets the data as indicating reverse causation: It's not association membership that makes a person successful. It's being successful that leads a person to join an association.

Authored by Dr. Arthur C. Brooks, the institute's director and a professor of business and government policy at Syracuse University, the report found that association members earn, on average, \$10,000 more per year than non-members, even if they have the same education levels and job types. Brooks also determined that association members are 19 percentage points more likely to say they are "very satisfied" with their jobs. In addition, using the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey from 2000, Brooks concluded that 45 percent of association members said they were "very happy" about their lives compared to only 36 percent of non-members.

Given the connection between these attributes and association membership, the study's greatest value may be in helping association executives understand what it is high-quality prospective members are looking for when they join an association. Brooks suggests that associations should consider how well they're delivering the following:

**Career advantages:** As an explicit career-enhancing benefit, associations can act as conduits between senior executives and ambitious young members.

**Continuing education:** Associations should focus on predicting what their members need to learn and offer appropriate education programs.

**Community:** Particularly in jobs that require frequent moves at the beginning of an employee's career, a tangible professional community can be socially valuable to upwardly mobile members.

**Opportunities to serve:** Motivated association members may desire opportunities to serve both their associations and their related charities.

**Accountability:** Entrepreneurial members are attuned to accountability and measurable results in their lives and careers, and will expect evidence that associations are accountable to members and the industries or professions they represent.

Brooks also suggests that employers can decrease attrition among their high-value employees by providing them with association membership as a fringe benefit. This may be especially important in combating the increased proclivity of workers born since 1975 to change jobs. According to Brooks, the winning atmosphere associations foster should logically encourage higher morale and greater job satisfaction for employees who might otherwise switch jobs.

A link to the complete report as well as additional information on The William E. Smith Institute for Association Research can be found by clicking on the publisher's blog at [www.ASSOCIATIONNEWS.com](http://www.ASSOCIATIONNEWS.com).

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