

Are you ready to go global?

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In the past 10 years, Steven Worth has seen a marked difference between associations that have gone global and those that haven't. Associations that pursued a globalization strategy have found new markets and member growth. Those that haven't are getting left behind.

"Some said, 'The first word in our name is "national," and if foreigners want to participate, they can come to us,'" Worth says. "I know of two that made that decision, and they're a shadow of what they once were."

Worth, president of Plexus Consulting Group, will discuss globalization trends today at "A Decisionmaking Matrix for a Successful Globalization Strategy," from 1:30 – 2:45 p.m. in room 242. He says the struggling economy has pushed associations to look beyond U.S. borders. "The groups that put a globalization strategy in place prior to 2008 weathered the recession much better than the ones that didn't," he says.

But what if you're just now starting to think about an international presence? Worth says even organizations that have already gone global do the same things as neophytes: Study the products and services they offer and identify markets where they're most needed. The so-called BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—are considered hubs of substantial economic growth. But that doesn't automatically mean that's where your association needs to be.

Regardless of which country you decide to start working in, Worth says, make sure it's a research-driven decision. "Otherwise you're subject to the whims of your board of directors, with somebody saying, 'I have a good friend in this country, let's go there.' It's sad to see association staff running around like dogs chasing squirrels in a park, spending the organization's resources in markets that may or may not have long-term potential," Worth says.