

ASSOCIATION HUNGER GAMES

When Katniss Everdeen entered the Hunger Games arena, she had only her survival and archery skills to help her survive mutant animals, starvation, and barriers like acid fog and fire.

For association executives, implementing a well-planned strategy can be like entering the Hunger Games arena, according to Aaron Wolowiec, president of Event Garde. “Implementation is a long haul,” he says. “There’s a big gap between what we plan to do in our associations—whether we use the services of a consultant or implement the plan internally—and what comes to fruition.”

Taking a page from the popular *Hunger Games* series, Wolowiec and Donna Oser will use imagery from the books to help attendees bridge the gap between planning and implementation during today’s session “Association Hunger Games: Victory or Defeat?” at 9 a.m. in room 201AB. Wolowiec read an entry last year in the *Harvard*

Business Review blog that would become the inspiration for the session: “Execution is a mine field.”

“As I thought about that phrase, it reminded me about the arena in the Hunger Games,” he recalls. “For whatever strategy you develop, there are intervening challenges that prevent implementation. In the *Hunger Games*, it may be the acid fog or the mutant animals. In our associations, the roadblocks are different but equally toxic.”

Lack of detailed planning, expectations that aren’t clearly stated and agreed upon, not communicating well with colleagues, not holding one another accountable, or poor prioritization of tasks and action items can all lead to an early exit from the Association Hunger Games, Wolowiec says.

The best way to overcome some of these barriers is to work through the tools, the skills, and the strategies suggested by Oser in the tribute profile to the right.



Aaron Wolowiec, president of Event Garde, and Donna Oser, director of leadership and executive services for the Michigan Association of School Boards.

Association Hunger Games Tribute:
Donna Oser, CAE

District: Michigan
Association of School Boards
(Director of Leadership and Executive Services)

Strength: As a tribute in the Association Hunger Games, I’d bring one crucial skill into the arena with me, risk the danger of the cornucopia to grab one essential tool, and employ at least one key strategy.

Skill: Katniss Everdeen’s skill at archery can’t hold a candle to the ability to ask good questions.

Approaching association work with a spirit of inquiry allows us to improve both our strategy and our execution.

Tool: There’s one tool well worth fighting for in these Hunger Games: data. No one wins the Association Hunger Games without a deep understanding of the membership they serve.

Strategy: Collaboration is key in the Association Hunger Games. Find allies. Work together to craft a plan. Hold one another accountable to ensure survival. Trying to go it alone in associations can mean sudden death.