

Co-operative Roadmap Program

Is it the best option for you?



Predicting the future is easy... but predicting it accurately is HARD. While no one can accurately predict the future, you can prepare for it, according to Daniel Burrus, futurist and business strategist. Now is the time for you and your board leadership to choose between crafting new ways of doing business or managing your decline. It's really up to you.

Let's affirm what we all know right now - for certain: REALTOR® associations are at risk due to the major transformation coming from outside organized real estate. Right now, you have an opportunity to prepare your people and organization to survive the big shifts and become indispensable to your paying customers. Your members are counting on you and time is of the essence. Do you agree?

Over the past three years, most REALTOR® associations have experienced a decline in membership and income and many will soon face a real value crisis. Many of you have already reduced your operating expenses by 20% or more to balance budgets. Further cuts are likely to affect the quality and scope of services. At the same time, your members and the consumers whom they serve have an ever-increasing appetite for more and better information, technology and tools that make it easier to buy and sell homes. This is especially true right now due to the economy, jobs and the current housing market.

We also know for certain that diminishing association resources in a time of expanding needs will not change. We know that most associations were not build for speed or risk-taking based in large part on the current cumbersome structure and governance. The challenges are clear, but what is the long-term solution to organizational survival?

You have at least three options - it's time to pick one

We know where the power to choose comes from – it's currently vested with the board of directors (BOD). While it's not always easy to move a board to action, we have learned a lot through our work this past year with 75 REALTOR® associations in 16 states. As a result of this, we believe you and your BOD have three options to survive the big shifts taking place right now:

- 1) **Stay the course:** many will choose this option as they manage their decline.
- 2) **Merge your association** or MLS with one or more other organizations.
- 3) **Partner through shared services** with other associations in your market area or state to make it easier for your members (paying customers) to do business and make money. This option increases your buying and staying power and strengthens your value proposition.

We strongly believe that a shared service partnership is the best option for most REALTOR® associations and we recommend it as an alternative to legal mergers for a number of reasons. Our solution to your challenges is the known as the **Co-operative Roadmap Program** or “**Co-op Program**” for short.



Our approach is unique and straightforward, but it's not easy

1. **Explore what is possible when two or more associations choose to work together** to deliver the best high-value services for their members. We review your current circumstances and consider all available options and scenarios right up-front. We answer the question, “What can we do together that we can’t do on our own and WHY?”.
2. **Take inventory of the existing products and services** offered by each local association, including existing contract terms from each local association. This step is crucial to seeing the big picture, forecasting the specific financial savings for each association and knowing the details (where all good and bad things live). This critical step is often skipped, but how else can you determine the potential and savings for the entire initiative if you don’t know the facts? All vendor contract terms remain confidential.
3. **Prioritize and choose the best opportunities for shared service contracts.** In our experience, it is best to limit the focus to 2-3 services to get started. Other associations have chosen services such as shared tax and foreclosure data, showing appointment services, lockboxes, cloud-based document storage, data sharing done right and mobile / tablet solutions without borders.
4. **Next, Focus Forward conducts independent research** and due diligence on your behalf and recommends best vendors and plan of action for each service category. We have significant experience working with vendors -- twenty-five different vendors so far. They have been very open to the Co-op Program and to re-negotiate current contracts for long-term business through our initiative. This has resulted potential savings of hundreds of thousands and even millions by working together.
5. **Teach the leadership how to work together and do more with less.** We educate your BOD and staff by sharing the results of our research and the specific recommendations with the combined leadership. Group knowledge and bargaining power moves people to action. There are no mandates in the Co-op Program; the power to choose remains with each local board. This is an alternative to mergers. Mergers, may be right for some, but they take a lot longer and cost more. There is no better or faster way to deliver these results and savings.
6. **It’s time to choose by participating in some or all of the shared service contracts.** The Co-op Program makes it easier for members to do business and make money because associations deliver measurable value improvements as fast as possible. As a result, you become indispensable to your paying customers by providing them with the best tools and information, reducing your operating costs balancing budgets and increasing your buying and staying power for the long-run. And you look good doing it! Another key outcome is we build trust between the participants. It’s our secret sauce.



Why our program works for our association clients:

- The **Co-op Program** is rooted in a comprehensive assessment and feasibility study by an objective and independent expert. Most boards can't see the bigger opportunities from where they stand. It's crucial to have a big picture vantage point before making your next major decision.
- **The devil is in the details** and you need an expert to point them out. We know each real estate community is unique and one size does not fit all. This approach works and there is no other way to achieve the same results.
- **We start with what's most important to YOU.** If you could have one thing, what would it be?
- **We teach leadership and staff on how to work together** in a collaborate manner to make well-informed local decisions based on group research, thinking and shared costs. The politics are real and we are experienced at working with them to help insure that you don't stall-out before getting to measurable results.
- **Success breeds more success.** Once you learn how to work together and build trust, it is much easier to do the next one. This results in increased confidence, buying and staying power to survive together. Win-Win not Win-Lose.
- **Others that choose not to participate will eventually want to join in.** We help make you look good. Good leadership is contagious and people yearn to be part of things that are successful. What does success look like to you?
- **Your members will know and see the results and be grateful to you.** Imagine when they thank you for what you do by working together to make it easier for them to do business and make money. Be indispensable to your members.
- **We have the experience** working with over 300 associations and MLSs and the vendors who provide services to cooperating groups just like yours.

For more information about how the **Co-op Program** will help you and your association, call Kevin McQueen, President of Focus Forward at (248) 374-1045 or email kevin@kevinmcqueen.com to schedule your own private consultation. Or have Kevin speak at your next association meeting or group meeting to introduce the Co-op Program and facilitate a related discussion. Learn how to increase your staying power and be indispensable to your customers.