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Hostelling International USA

## Association Anywhere member self service features help Hostelling International USA to reduce labor costs by 50%.

Hostelling International USA is a nonprofit membership organization founded in 1934 to promote international understanding of the world and its people through hostelling.

HI-USA, in cooperation with other worldwide national associations, belongs to the International Youth Hostel Federation (IYHF). This entire network, known as Hostelling International, offers more than 4,000 hostels in over 60 countries. The vast majority of HI-USA's members are made up of US college students traveling to Europe or other destinations outside the US.

### The Challenge

With 120,000 members and 90,000 new members each year, the processing of new and renewing members had become a labor-intensive challenge for Hostelling International-USA. HI-USA's existing database was not linked to their website, so all new memberships had to be manually processed by HI-USA staff. This included data entry as well as payment processing.

Like many organizations, HI-USA found itself feeling the pinch of restrictions on travel after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. HI-USA watched its membership drop from over 120,000 to about 70,000. Due to the massive drop in revenue, HI-USA had to find ways to cut costs within the organization without reducing the level of service to their members. As Annette Hinkle, Director of Operations and Membership for HI-USA put it, “It was clear that we could not continue operating with our existing system. We did not have the resources to pay staff to enter data.”

### The Solution

HI-USA determined that one area where costs could be reduced through technology, was its membership processing. By pushing membership joins and renewals to their website, which would effectively move data entry to the customer, HI-USA could reduce the need for data entry staff while increasing its responsiveness to its members. HI-USA worked with consulting firm Effective Database Management to help them select an association management system (AMS) that would meet these needs. In addition to finding a database that

Associations are always looking for ways to leverage their technology to better serve their members, cut costs, and become more efficient. One way to leverage technology is to “push” the data processing work to your members via your website, allowing your members to join and renew online. This minimizes the need for staff to process that data and frees them up to focus on higher-value activities.



Achieve More.

## Case Study

interacted well with HI-USA's website, they also needed to select and implement the new database before their busiest time of year which was only four months away!

### The Solution

After a brief but extensive search, HI-USA partnered with ACGI Software in Columbia, MD, to provide an AMS package called Association Anywhere. ACGI has been producing web-based AMS software for more than ten years and the product fit very nicely with what HI-USA needed to do, making joining and renewing via the HI-USA website very easy.

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Annette Hinkle,  
Director of Operations  
HIUSA

Working with ACGI, HI-USA was able to convert their membership data and go live with Association Anywhere in under 90 days. “We don't typically install our software this quickly,” explains Dan Kasprow, Chief Technology Officer and Co-founder of ACGI Software. “But because HI-USA was willing to define the scope very explicitly, and view us as a trusted partner, we were able to get it done in record time.”

### The Results

As a result of the switch to Association Anywhere, HI-USA has seen gains in efficiency, reductions in cost, and improvements in customer service. For example, with the legacy database, on average, a member received his or her membership card five weeks after their application had been received. With the ability to join online, HI-USA now routinely processes membership applications within 48 hours, which means the member typically receives his or her membership card in less than a week.

A byproduct of becoming more efficient allowed HI-USA to reduce the number of staff needed to process membership applications.

“During the busy season, we would typically have five full time staff plus up to ten temporary staff processing applications,” explains Hinkle. “We now operate with a full-time membership staff of three, even during the busy season. By moving the data entry to our customers, we improved customer service and cut our direct costs.”

HI-USA also realized other benefits not initially anticipated. “An added value of the web-based system is that we've been able to allow our Councils (i.e., chapters) to access their membership lists via our intranet,” Hinkle said. “This freed up staff and helped our Council volunteers have more buy-in with the organization.”

In addition, HI-USA is using Association Anywhere's built-in survey module to collect data from its Councils online instead of being collected manually. This functionality allows HI-USA to collect, review, and display data to all Councils quickly via the website.

### The Lessons Learned

As Hinkle puts it, “The one thing I would do differently is to be less fearful of making changes and trying new things within the AMS. Because we had had such a poor experience with our previous system, I was overly conservative with what I would try with the new database.” She adds, “Knowing what I know now, I would move a lot faster.”

### Their Advice

Leveraging Association Anywhere and partnering with ACGI Software were the keys to success. HI-USA continues to work very closely with ACGI to ensure that they are using the AMS in the most beneficial way. By implementing a powerful AMS package that allows HI-USA's members to manage their own interactions, HI-USA has been able to cut costs and improve customer service.



### About ACGI Software

ACGI Software™ is the trusted leader in Web-based association management software. Engage your members, empower your staff and get results with Association Anywhere®, an innovative AMS suite that tightly integrates with Web sites and critical business systems.

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