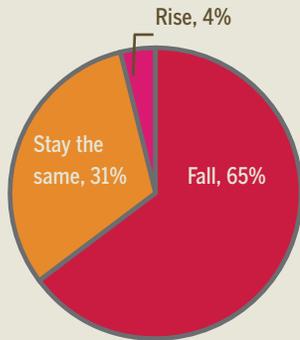


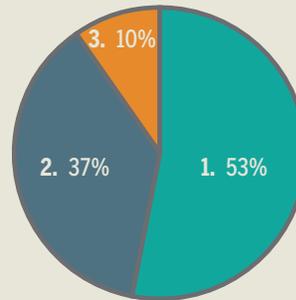
# 2012 Outlook Survey

Every association is different because every housing market is different, but there's no denying that every REALTOR® association has been touched by the recession. It's been more than four years since the downturn began, so *REALTOR® AE* magazine set out to discover whether associations are in recovery mode or are looking for more ways to cut budgets and reassess services. If associations are cutting programs, which ones? If they are still successful, how? The results from our most recent survey of REALTOR® association executives show that most are not yet in recovery but their optimism, creativity, and determination are strong. **By Carolyn Schwaar**



### Membership

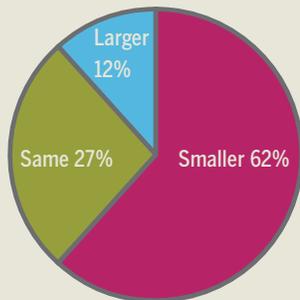
In 2012, do you expect membership to rise, fall, or stay the same?



### State of affairs

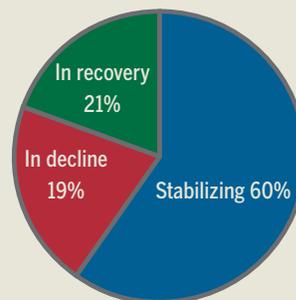
Which best describes your operations today?

1. Holding steady and adjusting to the new norm
2. Bracing for more shortfalls and seeking more ways to trim and save
3. In recovery and planning for growth



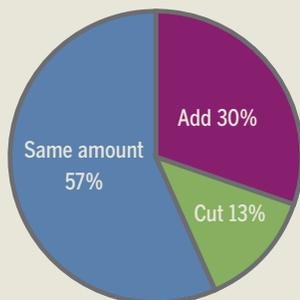
### Budget

Is your 2012 budget smaller than, larger than, or the same as 2011?



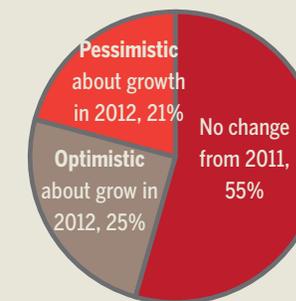
### Local market

Is the housing market in your area: stabilizing, in recovery, or in decline?



### Programs

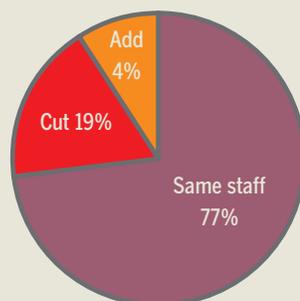
In 2012, are you planning to cut programs, add programs, or offer the same number of programs?



### Member outlook

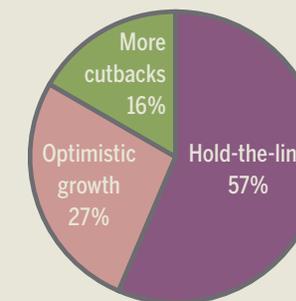
Do you feel your members are:

1. Not expecting 2012 to be any different from 2011
2. Generally pessimistic about experiencing any business growth in 2012
3. Generally optimistic about their business growth in 2012



### Staff

In 2012, are you planning to cut, add, or keep the same number of staff?



### 2012 strategic plan

Which of the following best describes your 2012 strategic plan?

1. A hold-the-line plan
2. An optimistic growth plan
3. A brace-yourself-for-more-cutbacks plan

## Which programs will be cut?

If you're planning to cut programs in 2012, which programs will be cut or reduced?

(most common replies)

Education/classes

Travel

Events

Committees

Any program that isn't self-sustaining

## Which programs will grow?

If you're planning to grow programs in 2012, which programs will be new or augmented?

(most common replies)

Education

Legislative advocacy

Community outreach and PR

Member networking opportunities

More frequent member communications

## What worked?

What was the **most effective** action your association took to stay viable and valuable during the recession?

A. **35%** Cut operating expenses

(i.e. rent, utilities, benefits, salaries, etc.)

B. **27%** Other

C. **16%** Found new revenue sources

(such as sponsorships, facility rental, fee-for-service programs, etc.)

D. **11%** Cut staff

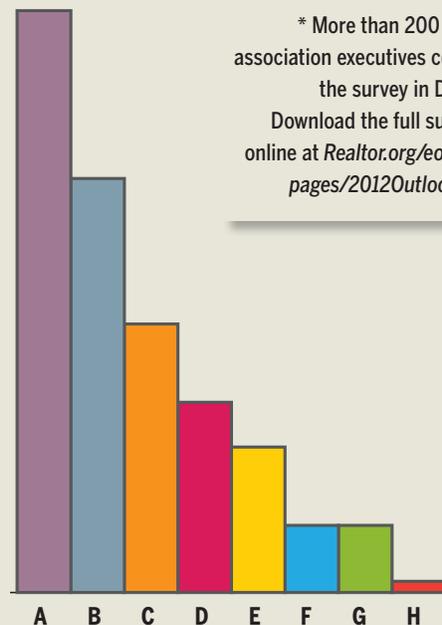
E. **9%** Raised dues

F. **1.5%** Merged with another association

G. **1.5%** Cut programs

H. **1%** Raised prices for programs

(classes, events, etc.)



\* More than 200 REALTOR® association executives completed the survey in Dec. 2011. Download the full survey PDF online at [Realtor.org/eomag.nsf/pages/2012OutlookSurvey](http://Realtor.org/eomag.nsf/pages/2012OutlookSurvey).

# AEs share their advice and 2012 survival techniques

Note: AEs were asked to comment anonymously.

“We have taken a very hard look at the office operations and **eliminated “nice-to-have”** telephone lines, transitioned to a less expensive copier/fax machine, eliminated a postage meter machine, eliminated almost all snail mail to reduce postage costs. Every office expense is scrubbed to find the lost dollars that do not substantially add to the member benefits.”

“We are trying to be not only the voice of real estate in our area but we’re doing our best to **be the voice of good news**, too! We are also doing everything we can to get our members to stop ‘hunkering down’ and look outside of their bunkers for opportunities for their business.”

“Stay positive, master sales statistics and the local economy, be creative with your resources, **renegotiate all contracts, and challenge staff** to find ways to cut expenses.”

“We are currently **exploring a merger** that, if approved by the boards of directors and then by

the memberships, should provide economies and efficiencies that can then be translated into an ability to enhance existing services or provide new services to the members.”

“Our 2012 goals are to improve on member retention and **acquire new affiliate members**.”

“Those who chose to stay in the business need the association more than ever—especially to protect them from onerous regulations. We are highlighting this **benefit of membership** in all of our publications and at events.”

“We don’t want to remove any benefits for 2012 but will look at **restructuring them for cost savings**. Staff benefits, health insurance, staff education, staff travel will remain the same as in 2011 but are at the top of the list should cuts need to be made.”

“We’ve cut staff, given no raises (including cost of living), automated office processes, cut expenses by renegotiating all contracts, including MLS, and

found some meager new revenue resources to avoid cuts in services. This year’s **fee increases** were the first in nearly 12 years and it was painful to have no choice but to increase fees.”

**“Our recession survival techniques were both difficult (laying off a staff person) and invigorating.”**

“We feel it is vital to **keep looking forward**. The more difficult conditions are, the more our members look to their leadership for help. We provide any assistance that is needed, from technology to understanding new regulations, and everything in between. Our board membership has remained steady throughout these tough times because our members perceive value.”

“We moved into our new association office that was built during the recession. The board felt that this was the time to build because building prices were down. Now the staff and I get

to clean our new 13,000 sq. ft. building ourselves, but we really don’t mind because we haven’t had to cut staff. It might not be very professional for the AE to clean bathrooms, but we learn to **do what has to be done**.”

“Our recession survival techniques were both difficult (laying off a staff person) and invigorating. We found ways to offer more programs and events at no cost to the members; we conducted a membership campaign where we are looking to increase our membership in 2012. We have a great and energetic leadership team who are committed to helping us **recover and grow**.”

“I found a **new office location** last year and now rent is less than half what it was. This allowed me to keep my dues low and not raise them in the three years I’ve been here.” ■