Agenda*Online*
Return on investment

summary

Background

The California School Boards Association offers **Agenda**Online, a web-based agenda and meeting packet development and hosting service that assists districts and county offices in reducing the amount of time their staff spends on preparation and delivery of board agendas, as well as reducing the direct costs for printing and delivery. Staff develop and post the agenda and background materials directly online, while board members can also access agenda materials online both before, during and after board meetings. These same materials are also available for the public to view.

The **Agenda**Online service was developed by CSBA in partnership with Apple Computer as a response to the increasing financial pressures on school districts and county offices of education. As school funding continues to decline, districts and county offices have been forced to reduce staff and cut spending. **Agenda**Online saves staff time in preparing the agendas because online submission and storage reduces the time needed to coordinate the agenda preparation. It also saves staff time and direct costs to print and deliver their agenda packets.

In the fall of 2011, CSBA pursued an evaluation of its **Agenda**Online service offering by conducting a return on investment (ROI) study. The ROI was calculated by comparing total savings to total costs.

A questionnaire was sent to 79 existing **Agenda**Online clients and 31 clients responded to the entire questionnaire resulting in a 39% response rate.

The questionnaire sought information about:

- Client satisfaction with **Agenda**Online;
- Client understanding on how to use the features of the system;
- Use of features by different stakeholders in the district;
- Savings of staff time and direct costs in agenda preparation, printing and delivery;
- Improved communication and efficiency through the use of **Agenda**Online; and
- Investment costs necessary to implement **Agenda**Online.

Total savings were calculated by monetizing the hours saved in agenda preparation and delivery using participants' estimates about the yearly salaries of staff who work on the agenda and adding these savings to participants' estimates about the savings in direct costs. Total costs were calculated by adding the first-year subscription fee and the responses to questions regarding initial investments.

Major Findings

The key results of the ROI evaluation were significant, indicating that **Agenda**_Online_ does indeed provide a time and cost savings to clients who utilize the service. The savings varied depending on the size of the district.

An overview of the findings include:

- 97% of respondents are "very satisfied" or "satisfied"
- 94% would recommend it to other customers
- 97% said **Agenda**_Online_ was a good investment
- Users found the system to be user friendly and easy to navigate and most of the features are utilized to a great extent
- **Agenda**_Online_ has had a significantly positive impact on the districts' other goals, including improving communication with the community and with the board, and improving the efficiency of meetings.

- On average, clients saved
  - 15 hours per regular meeting in agenda preparation
  - 2 hours per regular meeting in agenda delivery
  - $45 per regular meeting in direct delivery costs, and
  - $145 per regular meeting in printing and bindery fees.
- The average ROI for clients that filled out the questionnaire was overwhelmingly positive
  - 23 of 31 respondents had a positive ROI
  - 18 had an ROI greater than 25%
  - 14 had an ROI over 100%
  - 8 had an ROI over 200%
- The overall average ROI was 147%—an ROI that clearly reflects the great value CSBA's members receive from the service.

Average hours saved per meeting as a result of using **Agenda**_Online_
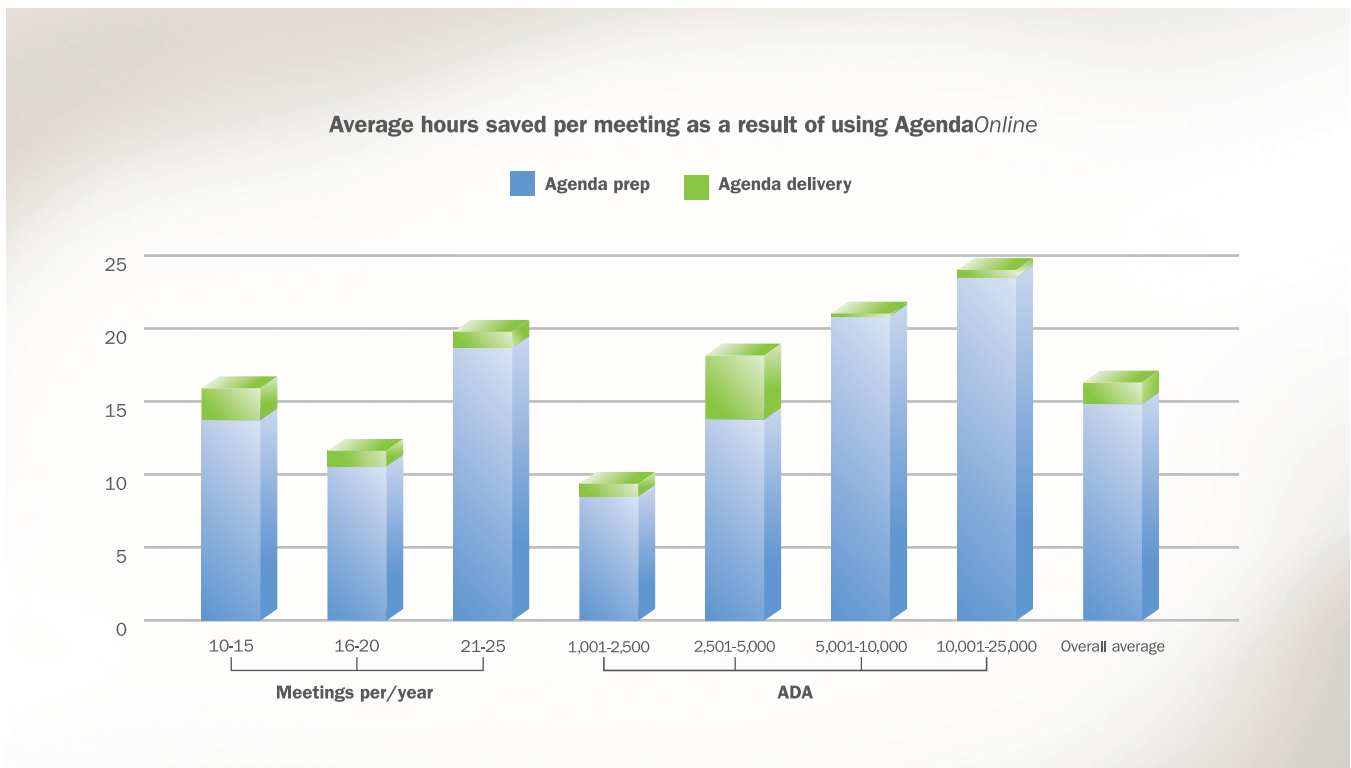
Hours Saved Per Meeting

The purpose of **Agenda***Online* is to save the district staff time in agenda preparation and delivery, and reduce direct costs for delivery and printing and bindery. Respondents were asked a number of questions about the savings of time and direct costs that have been realized for each board meeting as a result of using **Agenda***Online*.

The questionnaire asked participants to estimate the number of hours saved by each key user of **Agenda***Online* in preparing the agenda and the number of hours saved by district staff in delivering the agenda as a result of using **Agenda-***Online*. The chart on the previous page shows the average number of hours saved in both agenda preparation and agenda delivery per meeting by ADA range and by range of meetings-per-year. Overall, respondents indicated that almost 16 hours were saved in preparing the agenda and about 2 hours saved in delivering the agenda per meeting.

Value of Hours Saved Per Meeting

The client's return on investment in **Agenda***Online* is calculated by determining the value of cost savings realized as a result of using **Agenda***Online* compared to the cost of implementing the system in the first year. Specifically, the return on investment calculation is:

$$\frac{\textbf{Net Program Benefits}}{\text{Program Costs}} \times 100 = \text{ROI (\%)}$$

For the purposes of this study, Net Program Benefits is the total value of savings less program costs; program costs are the first year subscription fee plus other investments made by the district in the first year to implement the program.

The total value of savings for **Agenda***Online* clients includes savings in staff time used in the preparation and delivery of agendas, and savings in the direct costs of printing and delivering agendas for board and community members. The initial investment costs in the first year include the one-time investments in computer hardware and software, Internet access, and staff support for the board room, in addition to the first-year subscription fee. The client's ROI in **Agenda***Online* in the first year will be lower than it will be in subsequent years when there are no costs other than the subscription fee.

On average, districts realize a savings of about $460 per meeting in the value of staff hours saved in preparing the agendas and about $60 in the value of staff hours saved in delivering the agendas. The following chart shows the average value of hours saved per meeting, used productively in other work for the district, and adjusted for confidence per meeting by ADA range and by range in meetings per year.

Value of hours saved per meeting as a result of using Agenda*Online*

■ Agenda prep   ■ Agenda delivery

Meetings per/year			ADA				Overall average
10-15	16-20	21-25	1,001-2,500	2,501-5,000	5,001-10,000	10,001-25,000	
■$76.87 ■$395.77	■$59.32 ■$406.00	■$46.51 ■$563.96	■$65.95 ■$359.30	■$139.39 ■$380.01	■$32.72 ■$609.07	■$32.42 ■$513.05	■$60.59 ■$463.52