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STUDY FOR THE
BUILDING OWNERS AND MANAGERS
ASSOCIATION OF OMAHA, INC.

by

Joan V. Holley, Ph.D.



Center for Applied Urban Research
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Omaha, Nebraska 68182

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CENTER FOR APPLIED URBAN RESEARCH

PART I

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The Building Owners and Managers Association of Omaha, Inc.

In 1908 the National Association of Building Owners and Managers was organized. The 1979 membership form of the local affiliate group stated, "Most lines of business discovered years ago that it pays to organize. The office building business was one of the first to demonstrate the value of collective thought and action." In 1969 at the annual convention of the organization, the name was changed to BOMA International.

In addition to the annual convention of BOMA International, the group sponsors seminars and workshops, provides training and certification through the Building Owners and Managers Institute, publishes a monthly newsletter and the annual Experience Exchange Report for Downtown and Suburban Office Buildings, and has a Building Planning Service. A total of 3,700 owners, managers, developers, and investors of building properties belong to BOMA International. BOMA of Omaha, Inc. is one of the 70 local associations in the United States, Mexico, and Canada affiliated with BOMA International.

Paul G. Curry, chairman of the long-range planning committee of BOMA of Omaha, Inc., said that 32 local owners and managers of buildings belong to this group, and about 40 suppliers of products used by the office building industry have also joined the organization. The local BOMA group holds monthly meetings and publishes both the BOMA Monthly Occupancy Rate Report and the annual Office Building Experience Exchange.

Meeting during the winter of 1979-80, the long range-planning committee determined a need to increase the number of members belonging to BOMA of

Omaha, Inc. Mr. Curry noted that the Midlands Business Journal had published an "Office Space Directory" in the April, 1979 issue which listed the names of 137 building owners and managers, who thus would be prospective members of BOMA.

The long-range planning committee also had several questions: "What services should we offer to make BOMA a viable organization and more valuable to Omaha building owners and managers?" "What is the reason that some building owners and managers do not join BOMA?" "How useful to building owners and managers are the present programs of the organization?" The long-range planning committee further wanted to know whether the group should establish a multiple listing program; become involved in community service projects with local government; or participate in political activism projects, such as becoming involved when legislative bills before the Unicameral would affect the office building industry.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to answer those questions that the long-range planning committee perceived as related to increasing the effectiveness of BOMA of Omaha. Specifically, the study will 1) identify the primary reasons that building owners and managers are joining or not joining the organization, 2) determine the usefulness to building owners and managers of the various present programs of BOMA of Omaha, 3) determine the usefulness to building owners and managers of several proposed projects, 4) identify the most pressing problems of the local office building industry, as well as possible programs that BOMA of Omaha could offer to assist building owners and managers in solving these problems, and, 5) identify any other programs, projects, or services that BOMA could offer to make the organization more valuable to building owners and managers.

PART II

STUDY DESIGN AND EXECUTION

The Population

The population consisted of the 32 building owners and managers on the 1979 BOMA of Omaha membership roster and 98 building owners and managers listed in the "Office Space Directory" published in the April 30, 1979 issue of the Midlands Business Journal. While 137 building owners and managers were listed in the directory, some were found to be on the BOMA of Omaha membership list, and a few were listed several times because they were owners or managers of more than one building. Thus, sampling of the 130 building owners and managers was not done, and the entire population was used in the study.

The Data Collection Method

A survey instrument was constructed, and a cover letter was written and signed by both Paul G. Curry for BOMA of Omaha and Jack Ruff, acting director of the Center for Applied Urban Research (Appendix A). The survey instrument, a cover letter, and a business reply envelope were then sent to the 130 building owners and managers.

While typing mailing labels from the BOMA of Omaha 1979 membership roster was an efficient process, determining the correct mailing address of the building owners and managers from the "Office Space Directory" was a difficult task. The listing compiled by the Midlands Business Journal contained only the names of the buildings and a leasing information column which included no addresses. This column sometimes would contain only a last name and usually only the names of the leasing agent company. This minimal

information necessitated looking up addresses and zip codes and calling many of the companies to obtain the names of the persons who were the building owners or managers.

Three weeks after the mailing, 29 of the building owners and managers had returned the completed questionnaire. Two of the envelopes had been returned because of incorrect information. The survey instrument then was to be administered over the telephone to the remaining 99 office building professionals. From the telephone calls 11 on the survey list were found to be no longer owning or managing office buildings, and 33 of the names contacted owned or managed more than one building so were actually duplicates. Seven of the interviewees stated they would prefer to return the mailed questionnaire which they still had in their offices, and three stated that they would like to return the call at a more convenient time. The three return calls and six of the seven mailed questionnaires were not received. The researchers were unable to contact eight of the building owners and managers, and 12 did not want to participate in the study. Twenty-eight questionnaires were completed over the telephone. Thus, a total of 57 building owners and managers participated in the study.

Data Processing and Analysis

The data collected by the mail and telephone surveys were tabulated, with frequencies and percentages determined for some of the items on the survey instrument. Conclusions and recommendations were made from the findings of the research.

PART III

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Awareness of the Existence of BOMA of Omaha

Forty-six of the building owners and managers (81 percent) stated that they had heard of BOMA of Omaha before participating in the study. Eleven (19 percent) were unaware of the existence of the organization before receiving the recent mailing from the Center for Applied Urban Research.

Awareness of the Programs, Projects, and Services of BOMA

Thirty-five of the study participants (61 percent) said that they were familiar with the various programs, projects, and services of BOMA, while 20 (35 percent) of these business office professionals indicated that they had not heard of the activities of the organization. Eight of the building owners and managers who said that they had not heard of the programs, projects, and services of BOMA of Omaha were members of the group.

The Incidence of Participation in the Study by BOMA of Omaha Members

The number of building owners and managers who were not members of BOMA of Omaha was almost equal to the number of members of the organization who participated in the study. Respondents included 27 non-members (47 percent) and 30 members (53 percent).

The Primary Motivations for Joining BOMA of Omaha

The opportunity to acquire additional information and knowledge about the office building management field motivated more building owners and managers to join BOMA of Omaha than any other single reason. Twenty-one office building professionals (70 percent) indicated that this was one of their primary motives for joining. These respondents stated that they perceived that BOMA of Omaha could assist them by keeping up with local and national developments, supplying operations comparisons, increasing their knowledge of professional advice, operating standards, supplying statistical studies, and helping learn the field," and "increasing expertise."

The opportunity to associate with other building professionals was one of the primary motives for joining for 12 respondents (40 percent). Some said they wanted to "develop peer contacts," "form business relationships," and "share problems and ideas."

Other motives for joining that were mentioned by one respondent each were the energy advice, BOMA reports and resources, the government updates, the relationship with suppliers of building services and supplies, and the "feeling of responsibility to the building industry." One office building professional said he joined because he "had to," and another said he belonged because his company joined for him.

Primary Reasons for Not Belonging to BOMA of Omaha

Not having any information or contacts with the organization was listed most often by building owners and managers as the primary reason they had not joined BOMA of Omaha. Six of the 15 non-members responding to this question (40 percent) expressed this same reason in different ways: "Haven't been approached," "Not familiar with the organization," "Never given the opportunity," "No information," "Never informed of it before,"

and "Insufficient membership information."

The second most often listed reason for not joining was the cost of membership in the group. Four of the 15 respondents (27 percent) stated that the membership fee was too expensive for them. Other reasons which were listed by one member each included insufficient time, full occupancy of the building, no need indicated now, "the focus of business is changing away from management," and "IREM takes care of most of our needs."

Perceptions of the Usefulness of Six Current Advantages of Membership in BOMA of Omaha

The building owners and managers participating in the study were asked to rate six of the current advantages of BOMA of Omaha membership. The rating scale consisted of 1--extremely useful, 2--moderately useful, 3--somewhat useful, and 4--not useful. These results are summarized in Table 1.

Information Exchange (e.g., the BOMA Monthly Occupancy Rate Report)

Thirteen respondents (36 percent) perceived that the information exchange of BOMA of Omaha would be extremely useful, 12 (33 percent) indicated it was moderately useful, 10 (28 percent) said it would be somewhat useful, and one (3 percent) thought it would not be useful to him.

Opportunity to Develop Business Relationships

Sixteen building professionals (42 percent) indicated that having the opportunity to develop business relationships would be extremely useful to them, and 15 (39 percent) would find this moderately useful in their business. Five building owners or managers (13 percent) said these professional contacts would be somewhat useful while two (5 percent) stated that this would not be useful to them.

TABLE 1

SUMMARY OF PERCEIVED ADVANTAGES OF BOMA MEMBERSHIP

	Extremely Useful	Moderately Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Useful	Total %	(N)
Information exchange	36%	33	28	3	100%	36
Opportunity to develop business relationships	42%	39	13	5	99%	38
Education/training opportunities	18%	26	37	18	99%	38
Fellowship/social relationships	32%	29	27	12	100%	41
National exposure and relationships	25%	25	18	33	101%	40
National BOMA resources	31%	34	29	6	100%	35

Education/Training Opportunities for Building Personnel

Seven (18 percent) building officers and managers perceived that the opportunities for education/training of building personnel would be extremely useful to the office building industry. Ten (26 percent) said that these programs would be moderately useful, and 14 (37 percent) indicated that the education/training of building personnel would be somewhat useful. Seven (18 percent) did not believe these programs would be useful to them in their positions as building owners or managers.

Fellowship / Social Relationships

Thirteen (32 percent) respondents said that social relationships with other building owners or managers would be extremely useful to them, and 12, (29 percent) rated the opportunity for fellowship as moderately useful. Eleven (27 percent) perceived professional socialization as somewhat useful, and five (12 percent) believed that they would not find an opportunity for camaraderie with other building professionals to be useful to them.

National Exposure and Relationships Available

Ten (25 percent) of the respondents indicated that developing national relationships and exposure would be extremely useful and ten (25 percent) also said this exposure would be moderately useful to them. Seven (18 percent) said that being involved on a national level would be somewhat useful, while 13 (33 percent) percent of the building professionals participating in this study did not perceive this national exposure as being useful.

National BOMA Resources Available

Eleven building owners or managers (31 percent) indicated that the national BOMA resources could be extremely useful to them, while 12 (34 percent) rated this professional assistance as moderately useful. Ten (29 percent) rated these national BOMA resources as somewhat useful, and two (6 percent) said the materials, consultation, and programs of national BOMA would not be useful.

Perceptions of the Potential Advantages of Possible Projects

Building professionals participating in the study were asked to rate the potential advantages of three possible BOMA of Omaha projects. The rating scale consisted of 1--extremely useful, 2--moderately useful, 3--somewhat useful, and 4--not useful. These results are summarized in Table 2.

Multiple Listing Type Program

Eleven respondents (28 percent) said that the multiple listing program would be extremely useful, 12 (31 percent) thought that the program would be moderately useful, and eight (21 percent) perceived that it would be somewhat useful. Eight respondents (21 percent) also thought that the program would not be useful to them.

Political Activism and Legislative Input

Political activism and legislative input were perceived as extremely useful to 13 respondents (33 percent) and moderately useful to 17 building owners and managers (44 percent). Six (15 percent) thought that such action would be somewhat useful, and three (8 percent) perceived this proposed program as not useful.

TABLE 2

SUMMARY OF PERCEIVED ADVANTAGES OF POSSIBLE PROJECTS

	Extremely Useful	Moderately Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Useful	Total % (N)
Multiple listing program	28%	31	21	21	101% 39
Political activism and legislative input	33%	44	15	8	100% 39
Community service	28%	48	25	-	101% 40

Community Service (e.g., Relationship with Local Government)

Eleven (28 percent) building professionals indicated that community service projects would be extremely useful to their businesses, while 19 of the respondents (48 percent) stated that such projects would be moderately useful to them. Ten (25 percent) stated that the projects could be somewhat useful. None of the respondents perceived such activities by BOMA of Omaha to be useless.

The Most Pressing Problems of Building Owners and Managers

Respondents listed over 100 pressing problems of the office building industry. These problems can be grouped in six categories: high costs, energy conservation, government regulations, maintenance, tenants, and miscellaneous.

About 20 of these problems related to the high and increasing costs involved in building management including maintenance and service, supplies, utilities, and financing. Some managers expressed the problems of the high cost of building management as a need for "cost containment," "cost effectiveness," "budget restrictions," and "fighting inflation."

Closely related to the problem of operational costs is the issue of energy conservation. Seventeen managers listed energy as one of their most pressing problems. Ten managers expressed this problem as "energy conservation," one said "efficient energy usage," and the remaining stated this problem as "energy costs."

Government regulations was the third greatest area of concern to office building professionals. Nine respondents listed government regulations as a problem, specifying high taxes, the clean air act, handicap policies, government forms, codes, and rules and regulations. One stated that one of his most

pressing problem was "government interference" in the field, and another complained of "too strict Federal restriction."

Eight respondents said that building maintenance was a critical problem for them. Some building owners and managers had experienced problems related to maintenance employees. Some of the expressions of this problem included the difficulty of "finding good janitorial help," and maintaining a work force." Major equipment repair and remodeling also were cited maintenance problems.

The next largest category of concerns related to the tenants of the office buildings. Maintaining 100 percent occupancy was a problem to seven building owners or managers. One said he had a problem "renting lower level areas." The office building owners and managers said that they had difficulty "finding good tenants," obtaining the tenants' past history, and "keeping tenants happy." The problem of collecting rent on time was mentioned by two of the eight that had tenant problems. Three others stated that lease negotiations and disagreements presented problems for them.

A variety of other problems were mentioned by the building owners or managers. These included the downtown environment, space planning, long-range planning, the environment of an older building, rent control, vandalism, a poor market, updating an older building, environmental control, the lack of community growth, "the ignorance and impatience of people," and "this dead town." Another said that his most pressing problem was "keeping 500 people safe and comfortable within a good environment."

BOMA of Omaha Assistance with Seeking Problem Solutions

Eight of the 20 respondents who named the increasing cost of operating buildings as one of their most pressing problems perceived that BOMA of Omaha could assist them in solving the problem. Eight of the 17 building owners or managers who listed energy as a crucial problem

believed that the organization could contribute to ameliorating the situation. Six of the eight naming government regulations as a great concern also indicated that BOMA of Omaha could assist them in seeking a solution to these problems.

Three respondents indicated that BOMA of Omaha could aid office building owners and managers with lease negotiations. Two each stated that the organization could assist them with the problem of the cost of remodeling, as well as with tenant problems. Other areas in which the building owners and managers thought the assistance of BOMA of Omaha would be helpful were security, the Clean Air Act, the handicap policies, environmental control, the lack of community growth, and "dead town." The building owner or manager who stated his most pressing problem was "keeping 500 people safe and comfortable within a good environment" thought that BOMA of Omaha could be of assistance to him.

Program, Project, and Service Suggestions

Building owners and managers suggested 30 possible programs, projects, or services that would make BOMA of Omaha a valuable assistance to them in their work.

Some of the proposed activities were clustered into different categories. One of the largest categories consisted of recommendations for information dissemination by BOMA of Omaha. Types of information that the building owners and managers would like to have BOMA of Omaha gather and publish included the following: notifications of local and national job openings, information on percentage leasing, a better wage survey, a better rental rate survey, city planning information updates, area vacancy listings, and a legislative update.

Another large category of suggestions related to the functioning of the organization. These included recommendations for more informative meetings, increased membership involvement, good leadership, more responsive board members, greater recognition of the group by people outside of the organization, and a sharing of information with other groups and individuals in the community.

Political activism was specifically mentioned by several respondents. Areas of activism mentioned included petitioning for property tax relief, fighting the rising cost of energy, and "going after the Clean Air Act." Another form of activism mentioned by several building owners and managers was assisting in enhancing the image of Omaha and promoting the city to attract more industry and other commercial interests.

Educational programs were suggested by two respondents, with one stating, "There is a need to train operations personnel in all areas of efficiency and cost containment." One building professional stated a need exists for the organization to offer technical advice, assist with contract documents, and begin group buying of services.

Part IV

Recommendations

The research findings on percentage of non-members who did not know about BOMA of Omaha or had never received membership information has implications for the membership committee. An effort could be made to compile a current and accurate list of all local office buildings and the owners and managers associated with these buildings, rather than using the incomplete and inaccurate list that was used for this study. After this research and compilation is completed, an intensive membership drive could be conducted to recruit new members.

Since 40 percent of the respondents who were not familiar with the activities of BOMA of Omaha were already members of the organization, a well-designed brochure or pamphlet could be created that would effectively explain the programs, projects, and services of BOMA of Omaha to both non-members and members.

With more than one-fourth of the non-members identifying the cost of the membership fee as being the primary reason that they have not joined, the board of BOMA of Omaha could consider a reduction in the membership fee.

Since the usefulness of a wide variety of information was indicated throughout the study, BOMA of Omaha could consider publishing an informative bulletin on a regular basis. This publication could include some of the types of information that have been specifically mentioned by the respondents.

Building owners and managers indicated that the exchange of ideas and sharing of problems is of value to them in effectively performing their jobs. BOMA of Omaha could structure some of the meetings so that there would be maximum opportunity for this important communication. Group problem-solving sessions could be initiated, using effective group leadership and processes. The nominal group process could be adapted for these types of projects.

These group processes also increase the feelings of involvement by members of an organization, as opposed to the lecture format for meetings. Since some respondents suggested this increased involvement, another method would be to create more working committees in the organization.

Both the long-range planning committee and the program planning committee should be able to utilize most of the findings of this research study in determining future programs, projects, and services. The ratings of the present and proposed programs, as well as the suggested programs, should be used to guide these two committees in their work. Also the office building owners and managers stated their most pressing problems and have indicated that they believe BOMA of Omaha could be of assistance in solving these problems. The research findings contained in this study could be utilized to make BOMA of Omaha an important organization to all office building professionals in this community.

APPENDIX A
THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT AND COVER LETTER

March 24, 1980

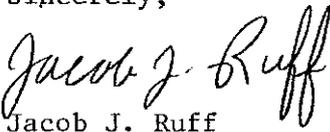
Dear Building Owner or Manager:

The Center for Applied Urban Research at the University of Nebraska at Omaha is doing a study for the Building Owners and Managers Association of Omaha (BOMA). The purpose of this study is to determine how BOMA can better meet the professional needs of owners and managers of buildings in this area.

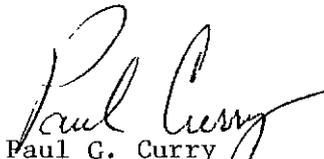
Enclosed is a questionnaire about your perceptions of the usefulness of present and proposed programs, projects, and services of BOMA. Your cooperation in this effort is important in determining the direction that BOMA could take to assist you in your position as a building owner or manager.

We would appreciate your completing this questionnaire and returning it to us by April 1. Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Joan V. Holley at 554-2764.

Sincerely,



Jacob J. Ruff
Acting Director



Paul G. Curry
Chairman BOMA Longrange Planning Committee

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Enclosure

university of
nebraska 
at omaha

Omaha, Nebraska 68182

Center for Applied Urban Research
402/554-2764

March 24, 1980

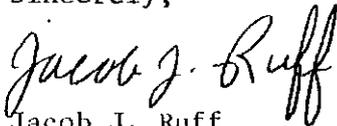
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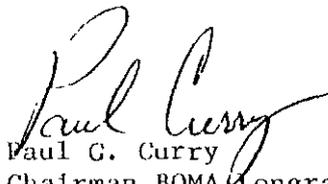
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