



AI and the 501c: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

DelCor Client Education Network

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What changed while we were working?

- Who **used an AI-enabled tool** today?
- Who used one **without necessarily thinking of it as AI**?
- Who believes their organization **knows which AI tools staff are using**?



Agenda



Yesterday: How We Got Here



Today: What Associations Are Doing Now



Tomorrow: Preparing for What Comes Next



Questions

Part I: Yesterday

How AI and LLMs reached the mainstream



Spoiler Alert: AI did *not* begin in 2022

1950: Alan Turing's work helped frame the question of whether machines could exhibit intelligent behavior.

1956: The Dartmouth Summer Research Project established artificial intelligence (AI) as a field and popularized the term.

1960s–1980s: Rule-based and expert systems attempted to capture human knowledge through explicit instructions.

Periods of inflated expectations were followed by reduced investment (“AI winters”), then renewed technical work.

1990s–2010s: Machine learning increasingly let systems learn patterns from data rather than depend entirely on hand-coded rules.

2012 onward: improvements in neural networks, computing power, available data, and specialized hardware accelerated deep learning.

AI: Old enough to collect Social Security

Perception



Reality

Transformers: AI's "Great Leap Forward"



- In 2017, Google researchers introduced the transformer architecture in "Attention Is All You Need."
- Greater focus provided the *context* necessary to advance beyond individual words
- Greater parallelization and faster training = huge advance

AI's Arrival: capability + a simple interface = BOOM!

- OpenAI introduced ChatGPT on **November 30, 2022**.
- Within five days, **1MM users**
- By January 2023, ChatGPT had **100MM** monthly active users.
- As of January 2026: OpenAI reported more than **900MM** weekly active users



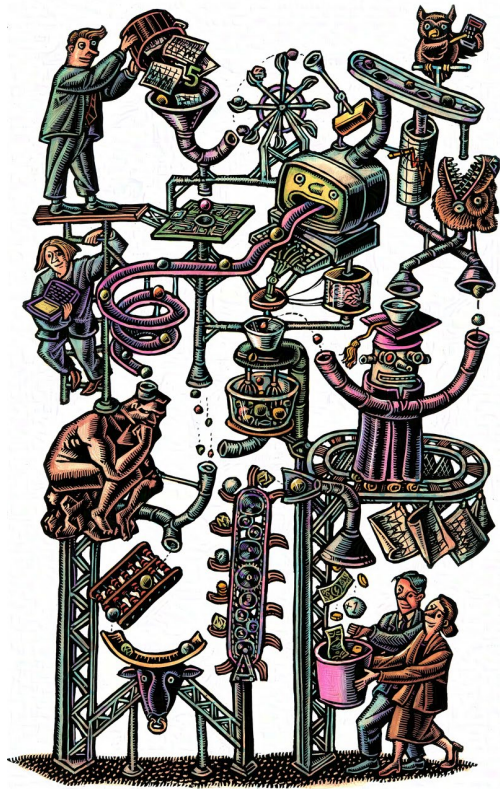
Then versus now: exciting (...and complicated)



ASK AI...



Capabilities	Possibilities
Stand-alone chatbot	AI embedded across workplace and business systems
Mostly text	Multimodal input and output
One prompt, one answer	Persistent projects, workflows, agents, and automation
General public knowledge	Organizational content and retrieval-augmented responses
Personal experimentation	Departmental pilots and enterprise governance
Novelty and drafting	Research support, workflow redesign, analytics, and service delivery



Part II: Today

What associations and nonprofits are doing now



Uneven Adoption/Discoordinated use

A 2026 survey of 346 nonprofit organizations found that:



- 92% reported **using AI** in some capacity.
- 65% characterized their use as **reactive** and **individual**.
- Only 7% reported having embedded AI into **goals, budgets, and strategy**.
- 47% reported having no **AI governance** policy.
- 81% reported using AI without **documented workflows**.

Beyond Efficiency: shifting capabilities

The goal: not simply saving minutes, but allowing higher-order work, personal service

Important distinction: AI can help surface authoritative association knowledge, but that does **not** automatically grant permission to reuse contributed content



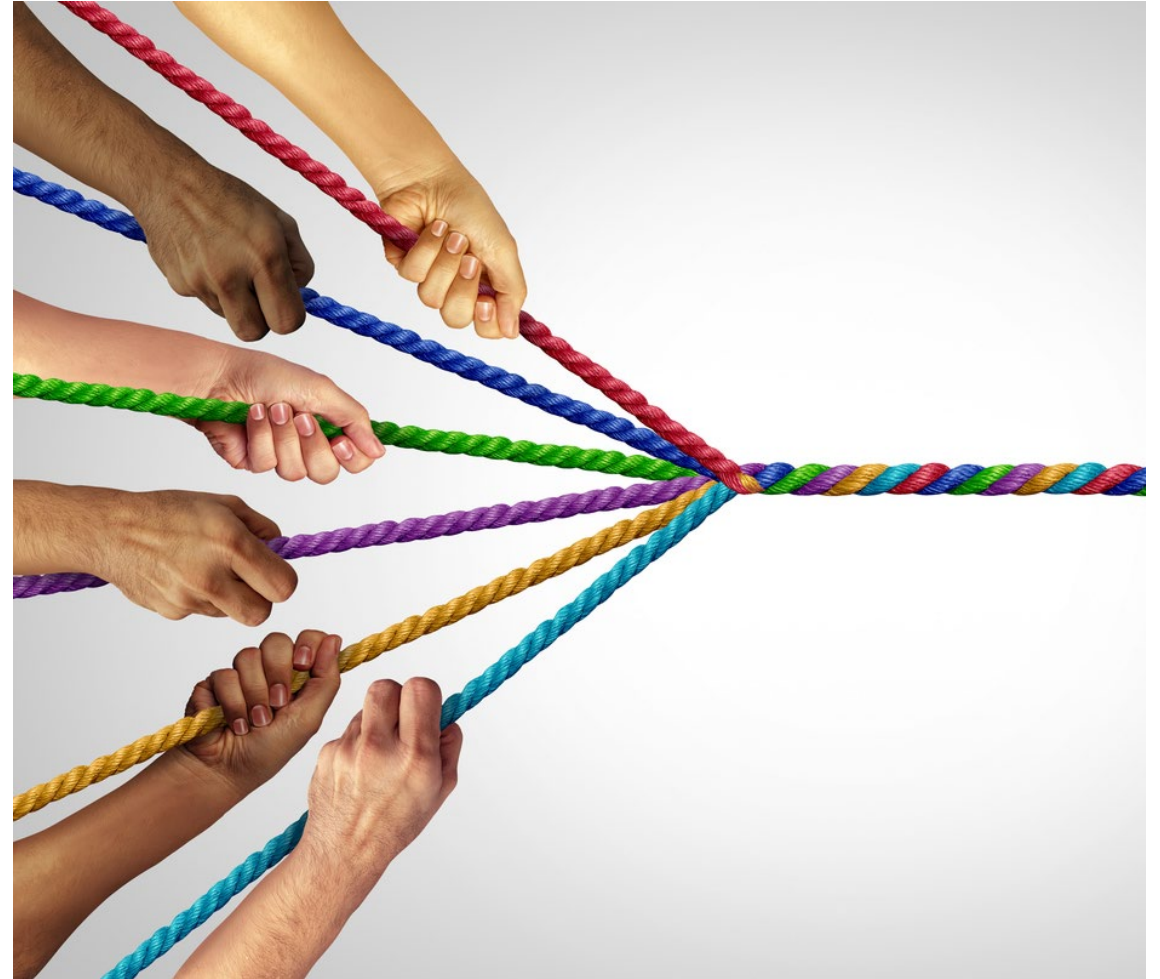
Member value: service and decision support



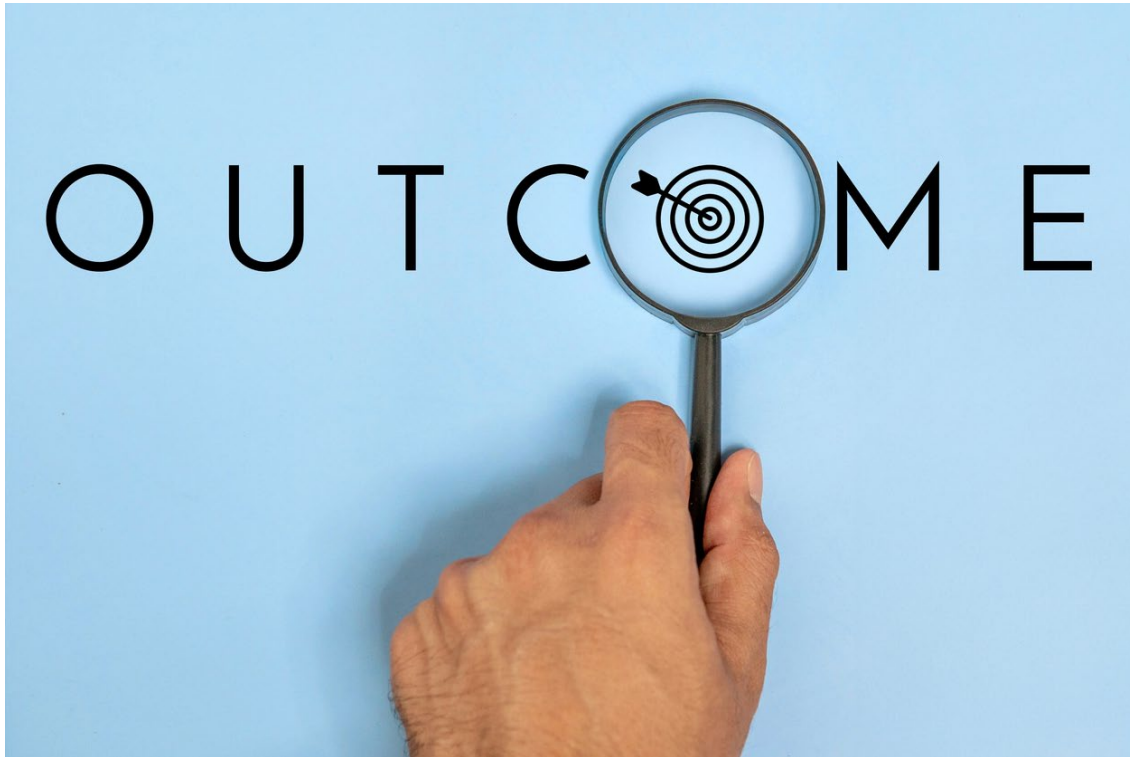
- **The goal:** Combining the best of both human and AI to serve both member/constituent *and staff* needs
- **Beyond the bot:** Automation *and* white glove service
- **SEO to AEO:** One marketing team is looking for the top 100 questions from members to ensure LLM answers

Case snapshot: business, IT, and leadership (AHLA)

- **Business units** identify needs.
- **IT** addresses security, integration, licensing, and scalability.
- **Leadership** establishes culture and protects intellectual property.



Use-case prioritization filter



- Problem | what **problem** are we solving?
- Audience | **who** benefits and **how**?
- Data | what **information** does the AI need?
- Risk | what could go **wrong**?
- Human role | **who** reviews, approves, or intervenes?
- Measure | how will we **know** whether it worked?

Prioritization formula: Value × Feasibility × Repeatability, adjusted for Risk

Classify and triage your potential use cases

- **Green** — low-risk internal assistance
- **Yellow** — requires defined controls and review
- **Red** — high-consequence or not currently appropriate



Part III: Tomorrow

Preparing the organization, not predicting the model



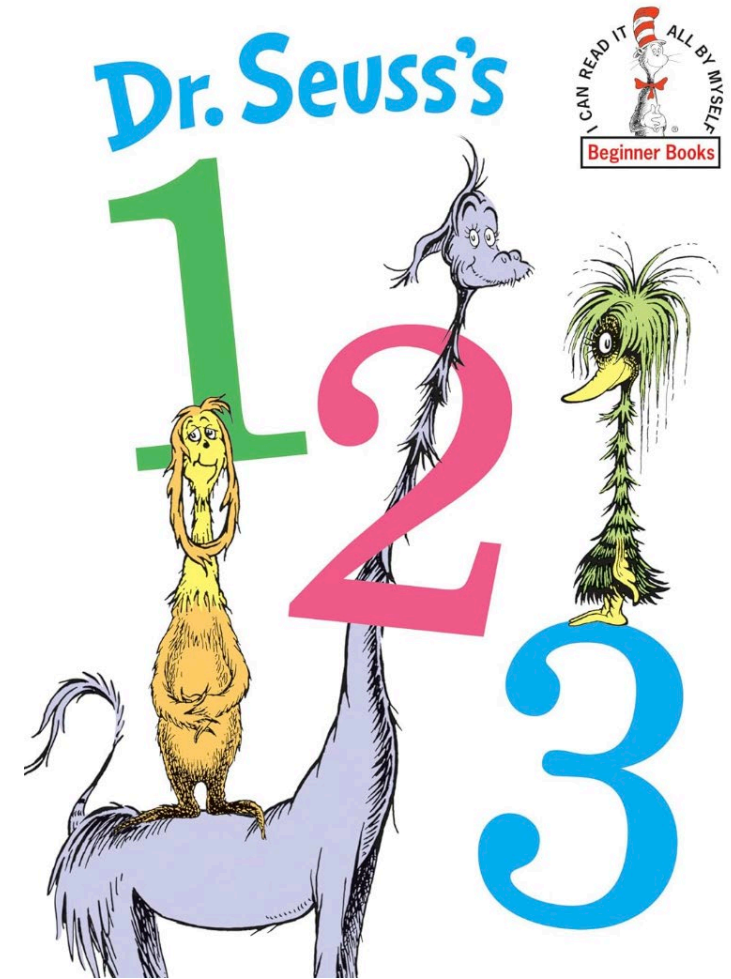
What we are expecting next

- AI continues to embed in core association systems.
- AI shifts from producing content to completing multistep tasks.
- Interaction with AI through workflows and agents rather than stand-alone chat interface.
- Model and vendor turnover will continue to complicate long-term platform decisions.

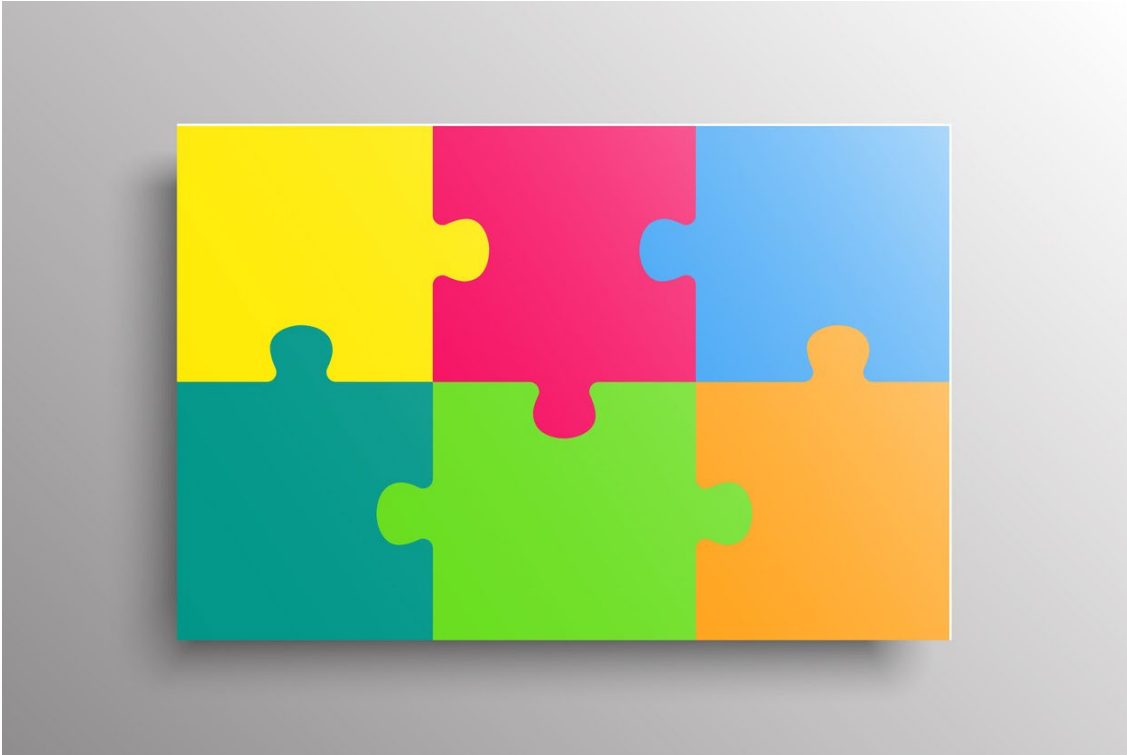


Keep asking the 'security' questions

1. What data does it access?
2. What does the platform do with our data?
3. How do we monitor, correct, and exit?



The DelCor AI readiness model



Six connected areas of readiness:

- 1. Strategy and mission
- 2. Data and knowledge
- **3. Governance and acceptable use**
- **4. Security, privacy, and control**
- 5. People, learning, and adoption
- 6. Measurement and continuous improvement

A practical AI maturity path



1. Explore

Inventory current use, provide basic guidance, review security, test low-risk tasks.

2. Pilot

Select several meaningful use cases, assign owners and reviewers, establish baselines.

3. Operationalize

Redesign the workflow, connect approved data, document controls, train affected staff.

4. Scale

Expand proven workflows, integrate across systems, reassess vendors and models.

As the next iterations of AI arrive...

- Understand your mission [context]
- Know and govern your information [custody and control]
- Equip your people to experiment responsibly [guardrails]
- Be able to change tools without losing control of your strategy [flexibility]

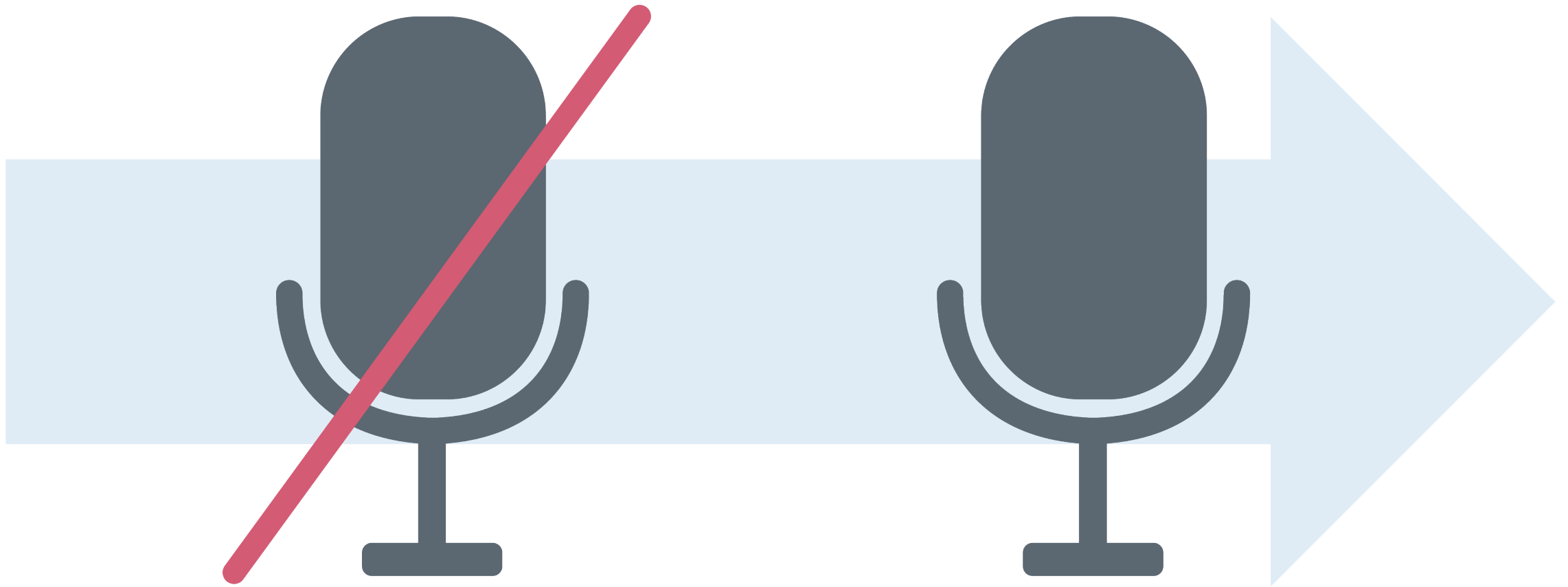


No matter where you are on your AI journey...



- Are **staff** comfortable with the tools we use?
- Have we **named** who is accountable for success? (a business owner and human reviewers)
- Do we have a **group** to identify, sponsor, review, and affirm AI initiatives?
- Are we **intentional** about what problems we are solving with AI?
- Do we have our data and environments **secure** from the ravenous appetite of AI tools?
- Do we have **inventory** of AI tools and uses?
- Have we **standardized** on which AI tools we invest time and energy?

Questions?



Resources

- ["Attention Is All You Need," Vaswani et al., Google, 2017](#)
- OpenAI, company reporting, January 2026
- OpenAI, [". ChatGPT Usage and Adoption Patterns at Work" January 2026](#)
- Virtuous.org, ["2026 Nonprofit AI Adoption Report," February 2026](#)
- DelCor **Reboot IT** podcasts
 - ["It Takes a Triangle: How Business, IT, and Leadership Make AI Work"](#)
 - ["AI as Your Thought Partner: Lessons from the Field"](#)
 - ["The Impact of AI and Automation on Associations and Member Engagement"](#)
 - ["An Entrepreneurial Approach to AI and the IT-Supported Sandbox"](#)
 - ["From Hops to Bots: Brewing an AI Strategy"](#)
- DelCor White Paper ["501\(c\) IT Maturity: Why Readiness Matters More Than the Right Tool"](#)

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