The Purpose of a Trade Association

A trade association, also known as an industry trade group, business association or sector association, is an organization founded and funded by businesses that operate in a specific industry. An industry trade association participates in public relations activities such as advertising, education, political donations, lobbying and publishing, but its focus is collaboration between companies. Associations may offer other services, such as producing conferences, networking or charitable events or offering classes or educational materials. Many associations are non-profit organizations governed by bylaws and directed by officers who are also members. Almost all trade associations are heavily involved in publishing activities in print and online. The main media published by trade associations are as follows: Association website. The association's corporate website typically explains the association's aims and objectives, promotes the association's products and services, explains the benefits of membership to prospective members, and promotes members' businesses (for example, by means of an online listing of members and description of their businesses).

Members newsletters or magazines. Whether produced in print or online, association newsletters and magazines contain news about the activities of the association, industry news and editorial features on topical issues. Some are exclusively distributed to members, while others are used to lobby lawmakers and regulators, and some are used to promote members' businesses to potential new customers.

Printed membership directories and yearbooks. Larger trade associations publish membership directories and yearbooks to promote their association to opinion formers, lawmakers, regulators and other stakeholders. Such publications also help to promote members' businesses both to each other and to a wider audience. A typical membership directory contains
profiles of each association member, a products and services guide, advertising from members, and editorial articles about the aims, objectives and activities of the association. The emphasis of association yearbooks on the other hand is on editorial features about the association itself and the association's industry. The opportunity to be promoted in such media (whether by editorial or advertising) is often an important reason why companies join a trade association in the first place.

Industry trade groups sometimes produce advertisements just as normal corporations do. However, whereas typical advertisements are for a specific corporate product, such as a specific brand of cheese or toilet paper, industry trade groups advertisements generally are targeted to promote the views of an entire industry. These ads mention only the industry's products as a whole, painting them in a positive light in order to have the public form positive associations with that industry and its products. For example, in the USA the advertising campaign "Beef. It's what's for dinner" is used by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association to promote a positive image of beef in the public consciousness. These are adverts targeted at specific issues. For example, in the USA in the early 2000s the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) began running advertisements before films that advocate against movie piracy over the Internet.

A common criticism of trade associations is that, while they are not per se "profit-making" organizations that claim to do valuable work which is ultimately for the public benefit, they are in reality fronts for price-fixing cartels and other subtle anti-competitive activities that are not in the public interest. Jon Leibowitz, commissioner at the Federal Trade Commission in the United States, outlined the potentially anti-competitive nature of some trade association activity in a speech to the American Bar Association in Washington, D.C. in March 2005 called “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Trade Associations and Antitrust”. For instance, he said,
under the guise of "standard setting" trade associations representing the established players in an industry can set rules that make it harder for new companies to enter a market.

In September 2007, the German trade association for Fachverband Verbindungs- und Befestigungstechnik (VBT) and five fastener companies were fined 328 million Euros by the European Commission for operating cartels in the markets for fasteners and attaching machines in Europe and worldwide. In one of the cartels, the YKK Group, Coats plc, the Prym group, the Scovill group, A. Raymond, Berning & Söhne agreed coordinated price increases in annual price rounds with respect to fasteners and their attaching machines, "in the framework of work circles organised by VBT". The Florida Pool and Spa Association, Inc. operates as the Florida Swimming Pool Association (FSPA). The FSPA operates as an independent not-for-profit organization serving Florida’s pool and spa industry. It was originally created by a national organization’s Chapters in Florida to serve as the coordinating and administrative support office to carry out projects, programs and services which could be best accomplished on a state-wide level. Committed to fair business practices and standards of health and safety excellence. Serves as industry educator, promoter, and information bank

All members must be properly licensed and insured and abide by the Code of Ethics. When it comes to building, maintaining, or repairing a backyard swimming pool let the Florida Swimming Pool Association help you. The 16 local Chapters review each member carefully to be sure they are properly licensed and insured for the work they perform. Click on “Find a Pool Prosm” to find a professional in your area. We encourage you to talk to more than one to find the right company to meet your needs. FSPA Mission Statement: Advancing Florida’s swimming pool industry