

Five Steps to Success!

Attract, Retain and Cement Member Loyalty

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Attracting and maintaining members is a common challenge for many organizations but it doesn't have to be. IEC has created a five-step guide that will aid in jump starting this process and provide you with the tools to help you successfully execute your plan.

Today's consumers have developed higher expectations of membership organizations. It is no longer acceptable for associations simply to advance its mission. Members now expect a return on their investment of dues dollars. To respond to this trend, organizations must consistently demonstrate the value they return to their members.

Step 1 - Determine Your Value

If you ask many association leaders and volunteers why someone would join their organization most will rattle off a list of "members-only benefits, including:

- Advocacy
- Discounts on products and services
- Publications
- Networking opportunities

But how many of these benefits are truly unique, exclusive, relevant and most importantly, valuable? What does your organization offer that is so valuable that an individual will pay for membership out of his or her own pocket? What does your organization offer that is so essential that members will maintain their dues even if they are in transition or facing financial hardship?

If you can't immediate answer these questions, you're not alone. So, how exactly do you determine value for your members? By figuring out what your members value most. Conducting a member value survey and analyzing the data will reveal what is most important to your members and what will propel them to renew their membership. The data may also indicate if your dues and products are priced appropriately or if other membership structures should be incorporated. Examples of commonly used membership structures include:

- Individual
- Corporate/industry
- Group
- Customized (based on tier-levels of benefits)

Part of answer the vital questions lies in understanding the fundamental differences between benefits that are important and those that are primary drivers of membership. Your decisions about what benefits and services to offer will come not only from your ability to understand your

members but also from an awareness of what you are capable of doing and what you should or should not be doing. To get started, review your membership benefits and label each based on the following categories:

A: The benefit is available to members and nonmembers

O: The benefit is available to members only

F: The benefit is free to members; nonmembers can purchase or access the benefit for a fee

D: The benefit is offered to members at a discounted price; nonmembers must pay the full price

Next, use a simple rating system for each benefit based on its impact as a driver of membership. For example, 1 for low drivers, 2 for medium, and 3 for high.

In addition to understanding the membership drivers, you should also know the next best alternative. Are your benefits scarce or widely available elsewhere? If there are a limited number of alternatives – or none – the value may be higher and you can charge more for them.

Step 2 – Understand Your Member Environment

Conducting an annual membership value study (or survey) will also help you understand your member environment. This goes beyond basic demographics to include

- Need
- Interest
- Motivation
- Attitude

Before creating any member recruitment campaign you should first determine your market penetration. What percentage of the total number of potential members do you have? If the number is greater than 75% you are doing great and may want to focus more on member engagement. Check with your state board of pharmacy for a list of licensed pharmacists in the state. Cross reference the BOP list with your current member list to build your prospect list.

Step 3 – Sell Your Organization

How do you sell your organization? We've all seen the typical member recruitment piece that lists a number of member benefits then instructs us to join. Ask yourself this question: would that be enough to make me join if I knew nothing else about the organization? Here are ways you can successfully sell your association?

- Stand Out: What can your organization provide that I can't get anywhere else? What do you do better than other similar organizations

- Be a problem solver: Tell me how you can help me solve my most pressing professional issue. For instance, if your members say that affordable education is their number one priority, you should emphasize your educational offerings
- Back up your claims: Don't say something that isn't true.
- Overcome objections: Address common reasons why people don't join in your marketing (price, time, etc.)

Step 4 – Customize your Marketing

Determine most effective marketing techniques

- Testimonials
- Storytelling: use storytelling to demonstrate the value of membership, not just the benefits. And use individuals—real people—to tell the stories. This will transform testimonials into personal messages of impact.
- Impressive statistics: think McDonald's – over 1 billion served
- Independent endorsements: from non-related companies or individuals
- Information from member survey
- Promotional membership pricing

Determine effective delivery methods

- Email
- Telemarketing
- Direct mail
- Website
- Social media
- Member-Get-A- Member (word of mouth)

Determine which promotional tools you will incorporate on your campaign

- Video
- Brochure
- Poster
- Letter

Step 5 - Onboarding: From Recruitment to Retention

What happens in the first 90 days of membership is critical to your member retention methods. Numerous studies have shown that new members are more likely to renew if engagement occurs within the first three months. Organizations should develop a comprehensive plan that presents numerous engagement opportunities during this critical period.

Sample 90-Day Plan

- Welcome letter
- Phone call
- New member orientation
- New member gift
- New member survey

Beyond the First Three Months

- Create at least one “meaningful” interaction. This can be anything from a phone or email exchange to attending an event or volunteering to serve on a committee or task force

Other Tips for a Successful Member Recruitment Campaign

- Examine what is critical to your membership and deliver it
- Know your most important members
- Go after low-hanging fruit: includes lapsed members and non-member buyers. They've already expressed interest in your association.
- Secure your budget! Prove ROI of membership marketing dollars
- Reevaluate at regular intervals. Continually track the results of your recruitment efforts and make any necessary adjustments