

A newsletter designed to help you build strong member relationships, retain supporters and improve communication with your patrons.

February 2016

Why Are Our Numbers Dropping?

Time and again associations ask, “*Why are our member numbers dropping?*” It’s a big pain point, one we have to answer to the Board for. The answer is easy: You’re not recruiting enough new members to replace your average annual attrition.

You’ve been asking yourself the wrong question. What you should be asking is, **HOW MANY NEW MEMBERS DO I NEED TO RECRUIT THIS YEAR?**

You can estimate the number of members you need using your last full year of reporting:

How many members did you have at the beginning of last year? Let’s say on January 1 you had 10,000 members. Next, total up the New Joins you have for the year -- Let’s say by December 31, a total of 500 new people enrolled. Yay! Your recruitment team throws a party. This means you should have 10,500 members on December 31, right? Yaaay! We’ve grown by 5%!!

But wait! Instead of growing, you only have 9,500 members! (Depending how you manage drops, this may be your new January 1 number.)

Here’s what really happened:

$9,500 - 500 = 9,000$ people renewed

$9,000$ divided by $10,000 =$ your retention rate of 90%

(Which is excellent, by the way.)

To grow by 5% what you really needed to recruit was 1500 and not 500!

What you needed to recruit to STAY at 10,000 was 11%, or 1,100. Ouch! That’s over twice the number of new joins you had.

How do you stop the bleeding?

First, you take immediate action to RECRUIT. Someone is going to call for a survey, and of course you want to know why the 10% is leaving, but don’t get carried away with navel-gazing before you scale up your recruitment activities. If you aren’t currently conducting mass outreach campaigns, it is time to test and find out which work best for you.

Calculating retention can get trickier for associations with multiple member types. For example, if you have “free” members such as Emeritus, who are automatically renewed, remove them from your working totals — their 100% renewal rate (even when deceased) will throw off your planning totals.

If you have students, their lower retention rate will impact your numbers. You can recruit any member to replace their numbers, liaise with more schools to recruit and encourage this group, and tailor renewal messages to students. You also need to manage Board expectations for student retention.

Be sure to educate your Board that there is no such thing as a 100% renewal rate. If you were to give away chocolate bars on the street today, you wouldn’t get 100% of the passers-by to take one. People die, change professions, fall on hard financial times or, yes, get mad at the association. Let them know what your average retention rate is, and budget to increase your outreach to get back on track. Only then can you begin to grow.

*Association veteran **Leigh Slayden** creates membership outreach and other campaigns to reverse downward trends. You can request her retention calculation tool and slides, and get advice on your tricky membership challenges, at www.slayden.agency*

How Often Nonprofits Communicate

TWITTER UPDATES
Multiple times a day



FACEBOOK UPDATES
At least once a day



EMAIL NEWSLETTERS
Monthly
EMAIL APPEALS
Quarterly



DIRECT MAIL NEWSLETTERS
Quarterly*
DIRECT MAIL APPEALS
Twice a year



*But a third of nonprofits
won't send one at all

Nonprofit
Marketing
Guide.com

npmg.us/2016

Harnessing the Power of LinkedIn for Growth

By the numbers¹ ...

- Professionals are joining LinkedIn at a rate of 2 per second
- Now more than 332 million members
- 1 in 4 adult internet users are LinkedIn members
- **43% of marketers have acquired a customer through LinkedIn**

That's impressive.

So, how can you get your Association on board and optimized for member recruitment?

1. Create your company page. Be sure to build it out fully with a header image, description of your association and your website URL, and create pages for the services you provide. Your company page will be your “shopfront” on LinkedIn, so spend some time on it. (TIP: do include keywords that will help others find you when they search for organizations like yours.)

2. Start a discussion group. These groups are an excellent meeting place for your members, so start inviting them to be a part of it, but don't make it a private group. Your LinkedIn group is yet another opportunity to engage your

potential members. They will hear about your upcoming events, benefits of membership, and other services that your association offers, and it's a great way for them to be introduced to you.

3. Regularly publish content. Post updates and news about your association, as well as articles and curated content that will be of interest to your target audience. How often should you post? About once every business day is a proven frequency. LinkedIn reports that companies that post 20 times per month reach at least 60% of their audience.

Important: follow the “80/20” Rule of Social Media — post 4 audience-focused items for every one promoting your association.

4. Be a great LinkedIn citizen. Add value by joining the discussions in groups other than your own and posting great content. Follow your members' company pages, and share their posts.

5. Make sure you promote your LinkedIn page. Use icons and links on your website, in your eNewsletters, and even in your offline marketing collateral.

¹ Sources: linkedin.com and the Pew Research Center

10 Guerrilla Tactics to Raise Recruitment

In 1984, Jay Conrad Levinson started something of a revolution when he coined the phrase “Guerrilla Marketing”. The word “guerrilla” comes from a Spanish word for a warrior with conventional goals who uses unconventional means to achieve them. Levinson took up that image to teach “unconventional” marketing tools that could be used in cases when financial or other resources were limited or non-existent. His books were aimed at entrepreneurs and small business owners who didn’t have the luxury of a large corporate advertising budget.

In that tradition, here are 10 inexpensive things you might consider adding to your member recruitment program:

1. Give your current members reasons to evangelize.

If you can paint an exciting picture for your existing members of what new benefits you plan to add for them as the association grows, you will give them a vested interest in being part of the marketing efforts. The “WIIFM Factor” (“What’s In It For Me”) is a powerful motivator.

A great way you could do this would be to create a video featuring members of your team talking about future initiatives. You might even show how quickly the association could get there if every member simply introduced one new person.

This is a great tactic to combine with a seasonal membership drive. Be sure to also give your current members a recruiting toolkit. Make sure they have everything they need to explain why their colleagues should join, including talking points about member benefits. You should also provide some sample text that they can copy-and-paste into emails and social media messages for forwarding to their friends.

2. Open a “side door” to some of your best events.

Offer current members a one-time “guest pass” so they can bring a colleague to an association event. It could be either live or online. If you host a multiple day conference, make the guest passes valid for the first day, but offer your guests the opportunity to sign up on the spot and be eligible to attend the rest of the event as a member.

3. Run a “pick-one” campaign.

If there are events or products for which you usually have one rate for members and another for non-members, offer prospects the opportunity to pick one that they can get at the “members-only” rate. This is a great way to showcase the kind of value they will get if they do decide to join.

4. Send out a free issue of your magazine or journal.

Association magazines and journals routinely show up in responses when members are surveyed about the membership benefits that they value most. If you’re proud of yours, why not put a copy in front of potential members

to show them what they’re missing? Mail a copy out to a list of new prospects each time you publish a new issue. Enclose a personalized cover letter that lists all the other great benefits of belonging, and include a response card or membership application so they can sign up.

5. Experiment with paid advertising on social media sites.

These channels have become extremely popular because they are proving to be very cost-effective. Facebook Ads and LinkedIn DirectAds are two of the most suited for associations, and because so much user data has been gathered by these sites, you can get VERY specific with who you target.

6. Try Google and Facebook “remarketing”.

You put a lot of effort into promoting your website to prospective members, but if you track visitor activity (which you should!) you may be shocked to discover how many people begin the process of signing up, but for one reason or another abandon their shopping cart before completing the transaction. This is such a common occurrence that the online search and social media giants now offer highly sophisticated “remarketing” tools. Once a prospect has been active on your site, but not purchased, you can have your ads pop up on other pages they visit around the internet, reminding those visitors to return, gain more information and perhaps complete their transaction.

7. Populate a video channel with useful content.

Google is the undisputed king of search, but did you know which site is #2? It may surprise you to know that it’s not Yahoo or Bing. The second most popular search engine is actually YouTube. Make sure that your current members, and your prospects, can find content from your organization there. “How-to” and educational videos are very popular, or you could publish industry or sector updates. Videos like these position your Association as an authority.

8. Form a strategic partnership.

A very efficient way for an Association to be exposed to a new pool of recruitment prospects, while at the same time possibly securing new funding and securing new benefits for existing members, is to leverage the resources and abilities of other organizations by establishing partnerships. There are numerous possibilities: sponsor partnerships, public-private partnerships, and partnerships with non-competing organizations that serve a similar demographic or provide complimentary services.

For a successful partnership, both organizations will be giving and receiving what they regard as roughly equivalent value. In other words, the goal should always

MEMBER-CENTRIC COMMUNICATIONS

A newsletter designed to help you build strong member relationships, retain supporters and improve communication with your patrons.

10 Guerrilla Tactics to Raise Recruitment

(continued from page 3)

be that both are stronger. Can you think of any organizations that might be candidates for this kind of mutually beneficial alliance? Do you already have a working relationship with an organization that you might be deepen?

This tactic is likely to require more thought, planning and work than any of the others we've mentioned, but the potential rewards are also much greater.

9. Start a campaign to change something.

Harness the power of a little controversy. Is there a hot button issue that a lot of people in your industry or sector agree needs to change? Put your association behind a very public campaign to raise awareness and rally support for a solution. Get your team out there lobbying. Sponsor a petition. Start promoting a hashtag campaign. Fighting for a cause can really grab people's interest.

This tactic won't work for everyone, and it does take an equal measure of courage and wisdom. You need to weigh up the risk that it could backfire, but remember that fortune favors the brave.

10. Conduct a brainstorming session with your team.

Circulate this list of "guerrilla tactics" for everyone to read, and then get together and compile a list of your own ideas to add to it. Once the ball gets rolling you may be amazed at how many new and innovative tactics you come up with. You probably won't end up using them all, but even implementing one or two new initiatives could bring some great results.

About Us

GRC Direct specializes in the production of direct mail, print and various communications materials for associations, non-profits, businesses and government agencies. By teaming up with us, you're adding a quarter century of experience to your team, and gaining access to ideas and solutions for connecting with your audience in the most effective ways. We provide all the services you need for the entire production process under one roof, ensuring your project goes out without a hitch.

*Call us today to talk
about your next project.*

GRC
540.428.7000 **direct**
Email: sherene@grcdirect.com

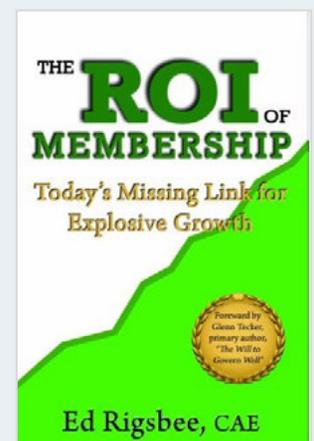
Book Review *"The ROI of Membership" by Ed Rigsbee*

Looking for the missing link to explosive membership growth? It's member ROI at your core. Learn to calculate, prove and communicate your organization's member ROI and prove to the non-members in your industry/profession that membership in your organization is a smart business decision. Trade associations and professional societies of today must continually prove the return on investment they deliver to members in order to stay relevant. Today, membership organization leaders must see their organization through the eyes of the non-member and be capable of proving the actual yearly sustainable real-dollar ROI that their current members receive in order to maintain high-level member retention and continual new recruitment. Learn how to turn your ambivalent members into member recruitment evangelists.

100% Five Star Reviews on Amazon.com

Highly Recommended!

*Publisher: Ryjon Books
Date: 2014
Paperback: 192 pages*



WEBSITES AND BLOGS MENTIONED IN THIS ISSUE:

www.amazon.com
www.facebook.com/business/
www.linkedin.com

www.linkedin.com/ad/start
www.npmg.us
www.pewinternet.org

www.slayden.agency
www.youtube.com