

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

February 2017

9 High Value Membership Benefits to Improve Retention



Nothing beats acquiring a new member – except retaining an existing member.

We get it - the influx of new members can be thrilling; but it's not a true indication of growth or stability. Are you pouring your resources into a brilliant acquisition strategy – but still not moving forward? Maybe your churn rate exceeds the number of people you're bringing in!

How do you target your existing members effectively? Every member will renew his or her membership based on the answer to the question: *Does the value I receive from my membership exceed the cost of its dues?*

Instead of cycling through members year in and year out, you should be looking to build a community, which is essential in both attracting new members and retaining *current* members.

With this in mind, let's look at a few of the most effective high value products, services, and benefits you can provide to ensure that you're optimizing your membership retention rate.

1. Hunger for Community

Your audience is people who are united by a common interest. Whether they express it or not, the majority of these people want to connect with like-minded individuals and build relationships. *You can easily feed this hunger for community.*

And here's the best part... Though community is valued by your members, it can be relatively inexpensive for you.

Start by implementing simple ways for people to connect – an official Facebook page or a forum section on your website will have your members talking almost immediately. Have a moderator or two assigned to check in on these sections and gather feedback from time to time. Create subgroups and subsections that cater to different people. The more you diversify, the more people will feel compelled to participate in discussion.

You should also connect personally with your members. According to the 2016 Membership Marketing Benchmark Report, **33% of people who did not renew membership cited “lack of engagement with the organization” as the reason for leaving**¹. That is too lazy on our part!

Check in with your members regularly by sending customized or personalized messages, whether by mail, email, phone, or through social media. This will require your time, but it will do wonders for your retention rate.

2. Online to Personal – Events & Gatherings

Association events are some of the most effective benefits you can offer your members, for a few reasons.

Association events take interpersonal connections from the “online” level to a more intimate level as you give your members the opportunity to put faces to the different names. You could even hold an event with the sole purpose of cultivating these relationships and it would be a success!

Be sure to get the word out well in

advance. Create flyers. Give your event a theme. If your members get a sense of community, they will be *that much more* inclined to get involved. Look to make your events as memorable as possible; these experiences help influence membership renewal.

3. Hands on Learning – Conferences & Seminars

Assume for a moment that your members want more than just this community. If they didn't, they'd simply host a neighborhood BBQ, right?

Your members are hungry for *information* too. Information that helps them survive, grow and compete.

Conferences and seminars provide for a hands-on learning experience. It serves as both a getaway and a constructive opportunity.

Invite a guest speaker. This can be a member of your association's board or another individual who is respected in the industry. People will come out for a name. Make sure your conference or seminar is well thought out, relevant and organized. Professionalism goes a long way and will leave a lasting impression.

4. Provide Relevant Cutting Edge Information

The content you provide your members will be your bread and butter. There is a plethora of ways to communicate with your audience – articles, blog posts, polls, interviews, and letters, and so on.

How you post to your website, social media channels, and the combination of these, is completely up to you but it's critical that you keep issuing fresh content *regularly*. A lapse in new content always results in a loss of interest.

When the time comes for your members to consider committing for another year, you want to assure them that there is a library of information waiting for them to digest.

Finally, quality AND quantity – you’ll need both in order to satiate your members.

5. Political & Social Impact

If there is a common cause that your members widely support, or a threat they face, your association has the ability to be more influential than a number of individuals. Particularly with associations, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and that is *invaluable* to members who are passionate about change.

6. Provide Exclusive Products

A sense of exclusivity creates demand.

There are likely a number of people in your association who enjoy membership for the sense of exclusivity it provides. The luxury of a specialty item appeals to most, and *particularly* to the elite and sentimental.

The product itself doesn’t need to be something you perceive as particularly “exclusive”. As long as it’s a strain or version of a product that is unique to your organization, go ahead and label it as *exclusive*. If it’s limited to a particular group, it’s exclusive. If it’s white-labeled, it’s exclusive. If it’s difficult to find elsewhere, it’s exclusive.

Whether you offer the product as a gift to newcomers or whether it’s a product in your association’s online store, any exclusive items will be perceived by your members as high value benefits. Invest in these products.

Top 10 Tips for Member Retention

1 Have a solid mission statement A strong purpose is something that your members can get behind and be proud of.	
 2 Emphasize value Show your members why membership is worth their time and money.	
3 Keep programming fresh Mix up different types of events on your calendar to appeal to more people.	
 4 Have a good system in place for interaction Make it easy for members to communicate and collaborate both online and off.	
5 Focus on the social aspect Encourage developing friendships and professional relationships within your associations.	
 6 Revel in great communication Stay in contact with members to solidify those connections.	
7 Encourage everyone to take a turn Share the responsibility and volunteer opportunities among different members.	
 8 Personalize as much as you can Gather feedback from your members to target offerings and events to their needs.	
9 Be patient Don't expect changes to happen overnight. Member retention is an ongoing process!	
 10 Flexibility is key You may be surprised by the things that work for your association. Keep an open mind!	

7. Early Access to Products & Services

Further to investing in the exclusivity of your products and services, consider providing early access to members.

As you’re developing a product, there’s no harm in releasing a “working” version in advance for your members to try out. This serves two purposes:

- *Members* get an exclusive look at an upcoming product or service, at what should be a discounted price in comparison to that of the “final” product, (once it releases).
- *You* get the unique opportunity to gather feedback prior to the official release of product. Ask your members to rate the product. Listen to the voice of the people, and make adjustments to your product as needed. You’ll not only be releasing a *better* product – you’ll be releasing one that you know members will gladly get behind.

Early access is a fantastic way to

generate excitement leading up to the release of a product or service.

8. Offer Discounted Products & Shipping

A discount is a benefit to which members are able to assign a tangible value, so your members can legitimately compare dollars to dollars in deciding whether to renew their memberships.

Reward long time members and encourage loyalty by providing greater discounts at various tiers of membership. If after each year of membership the discounts get better and better, you make it difficult for people to pass up the opportunity to renew.

Shipping benefits have helped transform Amazon Prime into a global phenomenon. 78% of Prime customers in 2015 claimed that free 2-day shipping was the primary reason for subscribing, per a study performed by RBC Capital Markets². Any shipping discount or expedited shipping service that you can offer your members certainly doesn’t go unnoticed. A perk such as this has lasting appeal, especially with your products that are already exclusive or in high demand.

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MEMBER-CENTRIC COMMUNICATIONS

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

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9. Early Renewal Discount

Beginning your membership renewal campaign *months* in advance yields better results than a halfhearted effort does. For one, when you provide people with the option of a *longer* payment plan, the monthly dues are significantly more manageable for some.

In that same vein, an early renewal discount is a reliable benefit that helps to boost retention. The discount can be as little as 5% off the annual membership fee, but as long as people feel that they're receiving the benefit of their membership *from day one*, your organization puts itself in a much better position to retain its members.

Like early access to products, early renewal provides your association with foresight into renewal rates and trends prior to your official renewal date.

It's a win-win for both your association and its members!

These are some of the most valuable benefits that you can offer your members, and that they are looking for!

The value of your investment doesn't necessarily equate to the value *your* members assign to the benefits they receive.

You can always do a lot with a little.

¹ 2016 Membership Marketing Benchmark Report

² <https://www.emarketer.com/Article/Amazon-Prime-Subscriptions-Continue-Grow/1013491>

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Book Review *"Membership Essentials: Recruitment, Retention, Responsibilities, and Resources"*

The fruit of over 15 years experience in association development, Sheri Jacobs' "Membership Essentials" is an extensive look into all facets of membership, from gathering initial interest to securing loyal members.

A very handy resource, Membership Essentials first lays the foundational practices and principles required for effective association management at ground level. However, the information is cumulative; and so this book is also jam-packed with invaluable material for advanced association leadership.

This book is the guide used by the ASAE and should be a library staple for both aspiring and established association leaders alike. Build your organization the *right* way, as industry "greats" team up to equip you with the following tools:

- Case studies on membership
- Practical lessons on association leadership at all levels
- Step-by-step guides for strategic planning and model development
- REAL examples of REAL successes and failures

and more!



Author: Sheri Jacobs
Publisher: Jossey-Bass
Date: 2014
Paperback: 304 pages

WEBSITES AND BLOGS MENTIONED IN THIS ISSUE: www.rbccm.com
www.emarketer.com