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ASSOCIATION TRENDS **SUMMIT**

Key learnings and takeaways

2019



Featuring trends in association management and some of the best innovations executed during the past year in membership, digital marketing, strategic leadership, professional development and event and meeting planning

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CHALLENGES

FACING ASSOCIATION CEOs AS DEFINED BY THE GROUP:

- 1 How to connect with members who are busy and/or rarely at a desk.
- 2 What are alternative approaches to sponsorship and advertising revenue generation, e.g. first right of refusal.
- 3 How does an association communicate its value “beyond the email inbox”
- 4 How to balance the quantity and quality of events.
- 5 How can associations better articulate and communicate their value proposition.
- 6 What are solutions that help associations more cost-effectively administer their operations.



MEMBERSHIP



Presenter: **Jason Acord, Director of Membership**



notes

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1 Segment your membership roster beyond membership categories will allow you to identify membership gaps and develop a stronger more personalized campaign strategy.

2 Don't stop after the first 90 days... On-boarding is a year-long process. Developing a plan that uses multiple touch points and personalized messaging, greatly improves the member experience and increase the possibility of retaining the member long term.

3 Track your campaign results and don't be afraid to adjust your approach.

- Keep messaging simple to understand and easy to join.
- Engage in 90 days and follow through with a scheduled communication plan through the full first year.
- Ask for new member feedback early in the process. Find out if their member experience is what they hoped it would be and, if not, how you can help get them on track.
- Tailor communication based on when and how members are engaging with the association. For example, if you have data showing most professionals engage in the certification program after they've been in the field for 10 years, don't promote the certification program to young professionals.
- The #1 reason people join an association continues to be peer-to-peer outreach, so create incentives and/or competition that encourage members to serve as membership ambassadors
- Convert text-heavy online membership materials into short videos featuring the benefits and value of membership.



MARKETING

Presenter: **Rebecca Wegscheid, Digital Media Specialist**

notes

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1 Aim for 80% informational/20% promotional when it comes to your communications with your members. Not many people want to receive constant event promotions without value. Make sure that your efforts match your target audience's preferences, including which platforms you utilize and scheduling of content and emails.

2 Analytics can be overwhelming, but knowing what your key performance indicators (KPIs) are can help you break through the mess. Pay attention to New vs Returning User behaviors, Bounce Rates, and Traffic Sources.

3 Marketing Automation can help you fully integrate all of your efforts under one net. Each platform offers a variety of options, some are even free add-ons to services you already utilize like MailChimp or Emma, can be scaled to fit your needs.

- Search engine optimization (SEO) is driving the ability of your association to be found.
- Keep social media centrally focused on value to industry professionals over direct promotion of the association. 80% of content should focus on industry topics with only 20% of content about the association's programs.
- Have clear calls to action in every communication.
- Anchor outbound marketing to customized landing pages of the website to facilitate ease and personalization of the user experience.
- Aim for a 40-50% bounce rate on the association website and a 70-80% bounce rate for custom landing pages. Custom landing page bounce rate reflects the push marketing that drives visitors with a higher likelihood of bouncing than the direct traffic visiting your website.
- Assess the association's communications through a holistic lens that integrates all channels into one integrated marketing strategy for the year.
- Adjust marketing campaigns as you go based on preliminary analytics.



BOARD LEADERSHIP



Presenter: **Eric Ewald, Vice President**

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

notes

1

Ongoing board training and education on the organization's products and services creates a more cohesive and effective leadership group. This is not just an orientation task.

2

Leadership performance improves relative to how familiar board members and other volunteers are with their individual roles and how they related to other's roles.

3

According to the BoardSource Leading with Intent Survey boards that assess their own performance get higher grades across all areas of performance. It should be done every two years.

- *Help your board members deepen their understanding of the association's programming in all areas.*
- *More than 1/3 of CEOs give their board a "C" grade for their understanding of roles & responsibilities. (BoardSource, Leading with Intent, 2017).*
- *Identify governance gaps and be cognizant of them.*
- *58% of boards conduct self-assessment at least annually. (BoardSource, Leading with Intent, 2017).*
- *Connections among the community of association CEOs serve as an invaluable resource for strengthened performance.*





PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Presenter: **Julia Renner, Senior PD Specialist**

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- 1 Offer microlearning trainings that provide learners 3-10 minute targeted learning opportunities
- 2 Utilize gamification to engage learners through competition and recognition
- 3 Implement a Learning Management System to organize online trainings and improve access to eLearning.

notes

- Offer professional development resources in a bite-sized way to accommodate busy schedules.
- Link learning with engagement in the association to recognize leaders in the professional community.
- Learning management systems are increasingly automating continuing education through competency assessment, progress tracking, cross-marketing of the association's offerings, and on-demand access to professional development.





EVENTS



Presenter: **Vicki Thein, CMP, Director of Events**



notes

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1 Utilize technology to enhance the experience for attendees and their engagement in the conference.

2 Revamp your sessions to include more participation from the audience and incorporate more mindfulness and wellness into the experience.

3 Offer unique sponsorship opportunities that also enhance the conference (gobos, photo booths, specialty food and beverage with logos, etc.).

- The trend towards digital content continues with even more associations making conference presentation handouts and materials available solely through the website or a conference app. An added benefit of this is that presenters have more time to finalize presentation materials and event planners can adjust room assignments in real time simply by updating the app.
- Project management software has offered staff, volunteers, and presenters the ability to collaborate through a common deadline-based platform.
- Mindfulness and wellness offerings are increasingly common elements as part of a conference agenda.
- Many conference are experimenting with offering pre-conference volunteer opportunities in the local community where the conference is being hosted to allow attendees to give back in a way that's aligned with the profession.
- Consider engaging registrants before events by asking them what they expect from attending the conference.
- Facilitate connections between attendees to be intentional about fostering community.
- Offer creative sponsorship that enhances the value of the attendee experience while giving unique exposure for the sponsor.
- Never underestimate the importance of food and its impact on how attendee's experience your event.