

10 TECHNOLOGY TIPS FOR MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES TO BETTER SERVE YOUR MEMBERS - AND EVEN INCREASE YOUR MEMBERSHIP BASE.

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Using technology in the membership function is more than data mining, keeping your Association Management System (AMS) data clean, and providing podcasts and blogs. Organisations can use technology to recruit and retain members and provide member services that go above and beyond the member expectations. Here are 10 easy - and mostly low-cost - ways to use technology to achieve your membership goals.

- 1. Provide a member service through voicemail messaging.** When members reach your voicemail message, take the opportunity to help answer frequently asked questions. Are members always calling to get their ID number or website password? Incorporate directions for retrieving this information online without waiting for your callback.
- 2. Use PowerPoint - movie-theater style.** While attendees wait for their seminar to start, run a presentation loop promoting member benefits, upcoming events, products, and services. Throw in some fun facts and trivia. Add in advertisers for some revenue.
- 3. Include email tags on staff signatures.** Remember the saying, 'Membership is everyone's job'? Instruct all staff to include short messaging in their email signatures. Create a schedule, and send new tags regularly.

- 4. Invest in on-hold messaging.** Everyone has heard music or the static of a poorly tuned radio when they've been on hold; background music neither recruits nor retains members. Create announcements that tell members how to renew or how to get involved, as well as announcements that tell prospects why they should join. Your messages should be short enough to fit within your on-hold wait-time goals.

- 5. Conduct quick, informal opinion surveys.** Survey software has made it almost too easy to conduct surveys. While straw polls are not always 'statistically valid', they can offer insight into member likes, habits, and so forth, or provide direction for in-depth surveys. Include one- or two-question polls regularly on your website and in electronic newsletters, along with instant results to build a following.

- 6. Use pop-up alerts in your AMS.** Set automatic alerts when members and customers have an outstanding balance, are missing an address, have special needs, or require other attention. When staff members access the members' records, they'll be able to update the record as needed and serve the member more effectively.

- 7. Conduct and record conference-call focus groups.** Conference-call focus groups are appealing because members can participate fairly anonymously, at their desks (without commuting). New phone systems often have the ability to easily record a conversation and save it as a .wav file to access at any time. There are plenty of resources for conducting conference call focus groups online.

Remember to tell participants that they will be recorded.

- 8. Make the most of your 'on vacation' assistant.** How many times do you get an automated reply message that just says, 'I'm gone from the office until Tuesday. I'll contact you when I return.' Often, there isn't even a signature. Take the opportunity to provide a full-service automated reply message: *'I'm sorry I can't help you right now. I'm gone from the office until Tuesday. If you need to renew your membership, contact Sue Jones at ext. 245 or sjones@abc.org or visit abc.org/renew. If you are looking for a list of affinity programs, visit abc.org/memberssave. If you have an urgent need, please call William Baker at ext. 266. You can always visit the ABC Web site at abc.org for more information or send e-mail to membership@abc.org. Thanks. I'll contact you when I return.'*

- 9. Use Google alerts to find info about your audience.** Go to www.google.com/alerts to have Google send you a weekly email with the latest relevant Google results based on your search criteria. You may find prospects to recruit, members to congratulate, and potential exhibitors and advertisers. You can keep track of the competition.

- 10. Expand your online existence.** Step out into the virtual world by creating a Wikipedia entry about your organization or posting videos on YouTube or photos on Flickr. Customers looking for information on your organization can learn about you in numerous ways.

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