



Importance of modernising your membership to attract and attain members

Article Title

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Article Summary

Membership organisations constantly face issues surrounding the retention of existing members and their targets of attracting and capturing new members. With costs of traditional marketing such as direct mail and events rising, many are turning to social media and online networking as a channel to reach new members and as a medium to add value to existing member packages.

Article Body

So why is social networking important for membership organisations?

- It enables engagement with specific target groups
- It can help to increase awareness around various membership campaigns
- It can stimulate positive online professional networking, suggestions and feedback from members
- It creates a more transparent and open membership organisation
- It can encourage new and existing members to get involved in issues affecting the industry
- Social media improves marketing campaigns and adds value to the member experience
- It helps to attract younger members from the industry
- It enables 'real time' communications with members
- Membership organisations can use social media to gauge immediate reaction to marketing initiatives
- Provides an effective tool for members to promote the organisation via word of mouth

Since membership organisations are often built around the ideas of community and networking, it can seem an easy and obvious step to move these ideas online, via one of these networking channels. The most popular tools are LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a business-oriented social networking site. Founded in December 2002 and launched in May 2003, it is mainly used for professional networking. As of 8 April 2010, LinkedIn had more than 65 million registered users, spanning more than 200 countries and territories worldwide.

Using LinkedIn as a membership communication tool:

- A closed user group, i.e. members only, can be created to provide members with a unique opportunity to network with other members without revealing personal contact details
- Groups can be used to communicate news and start online discussion and debate
- For members with a particular interest, focused sub-groups can be set-up for (named SIGs - Special Interest Groups)
- LinkedIn can be used to promote events very effectively





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- Member organisations can upload photos, videos, create online (member and non-member) polls, take part in forums, and receive email updates

Having a LinkedIn group that is limited to members also has the potential to attract new members. Alternatively, having an open group where anyone can join has the benefit of providing the membership organisation with a list of prospects that may be suitable new customer targets.

Facebook

A Facebook Page is a customisable presence for an organisation, product, or public personality to join the conversation with Facebook users. The page focuses on the stream of content posted by the page administrators.

By leveraging the real connections between friends on Facebook, a page lets fans become brand advocates. Posts by the page will start to appear in News Feeds, giving pages a stronger voice to reach their fans.

Using Facebook as a membership communication tool:

- Facebook pages can be used to promote events very effectively
- Organisations can upload photos, videos, take part in forums, and receive email updates
- Facebook page status updates can be linked automatically to Twitter
- Organisations cannot moderate what is said, but they can make the group private, only inviting registered members

Facebook also offers unique opportunities such as targeting ads to fans, so there are opportunities to market to non-members who may be interested in an association's products and/or services even if they're not candidates for membership.

Twitter

Twitter is a social networking and microblogging service that enables its users to send and read messages known as tweets. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the author's profile page and delivered to the author's subscribers who are known as followers.

Using Twitter as a membership communication tool:

- Twitter can also be used to provide mini-updates for one-on-one members
- Membership organisations can use Twitter as a means to inform event participants and latest event happenings/changes.
- Organisations can post links to new information, advice, tools and resources on their websites
- Organisations can instantly communicate important messages and 'calls to action' to their membership base
- Customers can subscribe via mobile or RSS for instant notification





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Managing Social Media Channels

Social media is only an effective form of marketing and communication if it is managed properly. Social networks must be updated on a regular basis with fresh new content. Membership managers must also monitor these channels for membership activity, and ensure all questions or comments from members are responded to. It is not good enough to create a page or presence on these channels then leave them at that. Efforts must be made to nurture conversation and help to build the community.

Managing these channels can be made easier through the use of a Membership Management Solution. These software solutions enable membership managers to control all these channels without having to log in individually. Managing the accounts from a central platform ensures a cohesive and consistent message and helps to foster the high level of engagement between members and the membership organisation managing the social media channel.

Membership Management Solutions also include modules to help communicate with members via email and the web. They also aid in the analysis and reporting of membership statistics, helping membership managers to understand the effects and ROI of their efforts.

Resource Box

[Silverbear Membership Management Solution](#) is part of the portfolio of solutions from [Silverbear Ltd](#). Employed within societies and membership organisations throughout the UK, Silverbear Membership helps organisations to build, define, examine, inform and communicate with existing and potential members.

Silverbear Membership is helping membership organisations on a daily basis. For more information on our membership solution and the benefits of membership management software, visit their website: <http://www.SilverbearMembership.co.uk>

