

# Top 15 Proven Growth Strategies

A guide for membership organisations



# Introduction

## How to stay relevant with emerging trends and changes in user behaviour

Future trends and patterns are emerging rapidly as new tools and platforms are developed each day. Associations and NFPs are faced with the challenge of keeping up to date with these shifts. So, how are Associations adapting to these trends?

Having worked with community and Association networks for over 20 years, helping build value for associations and their members, we have personally seen associations and NFPs looking to advance within their industry and make a difference. Below are 15 core strategies, which from our experience, we have found to work best:



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## 1. Set a Clear Path

Your vision, mission, goals and specific objectives are the cornerstone of your organisation. Set a clear direction and ensure that all staff, members and partners understand what it is and what part they play in the achievement of your goals.

*“Member engagement is largely about encouraging members to interact and share in the experiences you create as an organisation.”*

## 2. Build Value

Growth and loyalty will grow when a strong member engagement strategy is well executed. Focus on value creation which can be achieved by providing excellent content, engaging campaigns, opportunities for your members to collaborate, great service and customer support from your staff members. Ensure your organisation is relevant and is seen as a driver that helps your members achieve ‘their’ success, whether it is through education, information, collaboration or other services provided.

## 3. Understand Your Members

Measure the health of your membership base as a healthy membership is vital to a strong organisation. Pay close attention to membership retention and sign-up rates. Do you offer an easy online renewal process for members? Track and measure website and newsletter readership rates, and understand what topics are of interest to members so that you can build on those.

## 4. Information Delivery

Associations are now realising the effects of information overload and are looking for ways around it. How are your members consuming information? Each individual consumes information and content differently to the next person, whether it be through the use of a certain device (Smartphone or Tablet), an information platform (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter), or time of day (during or after work, maybe weekends). As a result, some of your members will look to Twitter for information or news via their desktop and others will use their smartphone. Make sure that you are covering all outlets and providing members with a number of ways to consume your information.

*Fact: Over 50% of emails are opened today on smartphones.*

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*Tip: Associations need to embrace social media in everyday activities if you want to continue to grow and keep members engaged.*

## 5. Create a Marketing Plan

All organisations must have a Marketing plan which details their client (member and sponsors) demographic, geographic and psychographic characteristics, their products or services, their competition (and yes - you do have competition). Outline your strategic difference and your strategies to engage new members and retain existing members. Don't forget to include your social media campaigns in your marketing plan as these are critical for growth. Make sure your marketing actions are planned, relevant, affordable, achievable and measurable.

## 6. Online Education

As well as your normal events, seminars, workshops and conferences, take advantage of online educational resources. They are cheaper to deliver, more convenient for your members, and still provide high levels of information and education to members. Online eLearning is becoming more accessible via open source tools such as Moodle and are now available via online platforms such as; smartphones and tablets making it easily reachable for members.

## 7. Segmentation

Having the ability to segment your members provides you with more opportunities to personalise content to their specific interests. There are a number of features you can segment such as; newsletters, news articles and events, and you can deliver each based on the different member variables such as; job title, topics of interest, geographically, membership level or status to increase the likelihood of interaction and engagement with your members.

## 8. Humanise your Association and Brand

Create a voice within your industry. This person is someone who is passionate about your cause and is a natural communicator. You may already have a figurehead like this who represents your industry. Allow this person to build their presence both offline and online. A few ideas on how this person can become an industry thought leader could be by; posting blogs on your website, guest blog on other websites, host a webinar, speaking opportunities or get them active on social media. Video is gaining momentum so why not video them addressing interesting industry topics or questions. You will begin to humanise your association while increasing engagement.

*Tip: Create a YouTube channel or video section on your website.*

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## 9. Collaboration Hubs

Member collaboration hubs are vital for members to express their thoughts on topic specific content. It is important to keep your audience engaged in your community with great content and resources as well as keeping them well informed. There are many other groups and competing companies such as LinkedIn who also do this well. So why not allow like-minded people to join together for the benefit of themselves and one another.

## 10. Responsive Websites

Mobile and responsive design is a huge focus with more and more people using mobile devices to view information. We expect that this will remain the case into the future for all community driven websites. Having a responsive platform makes a big difference for users being able to access your website on different devices and therefore enhances the user experience and their interaction with you. All of this impacts on your website engagement, which in turn impacts your member engagement levels. Websites are now being crafted with the aim to provide optimal viewing and an interactive experience. It would also be worth ensuring that your newsletters are responsive to allow for easy viewing as these forms of communication would also be viewed predominantly on mobile devices.

*Stat: The Average user spends around 39% of their time online on a smartphone.*

## 11. Promote to Future Members

Identify your target future members by promoting your organisation to University Students and Trade Apprentices, and get to know the campus management and lecturers. You could offer special discounted rates to the campus team and students and work experience programs and a Jobs Portal for student members as a way to build value for them and get them to interact with your association.

## 12. Social Media

Social media has increasingly become a part of our daily lives, and your staff should see this as an opportunity to engage with your community. Take the time to outline goals and develop content and marketing tactics to help meet these goals via social media. Successful social media campaigns work because they allow like-minded people to discuss topics of importance to them in a collaborative and fun way. Having a social media hub on your website is great avenue for members to connect, build relationships and problem solve, so keep this private to your member community.



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## 13. Send Relevant Communications

Deliver personalised communications to members including information relevant to them personally, not just general information which does not offer them any strategic value. We all get far too many emails so make all correspondence as relevant as possible. Make sure your newsletter headings are catchy and interesting to avoid getting mixed up with spam emails. Allow members to opt-out of all or some correspondence types.

## 14. Use Public Relations

All publications are constantly on the lookout for good stories, so develop a rapport with journalists in your area or with a focus on your industry segment. The vast majority of NFPs have good stories to tell and PR is free. Where possible involve these journalists within your community offering them free opportunities to attend events and meet your members. Also be on the lookout for any awards within your industry as this is another great opportunity to showcase your work and gain recognition from a third party.

*“Deliver personalised communications to members including information relevant to them personally,”*

## 15. Quick Responses

People want answers quickly and digital assistants like Cortana and Siri make this happen. Make sure your members have all the answers they need quickly on your website via a Q&A section or FAQs. This allows members to gain answers to industry questions quickly or by expert panels.

## *Insight - Opportunity - Engagement - Interaction*

Member Evolution has been delivering dedicated solutions to the Membership Management Marketplace since 2009. The ME Association Membership Software streamlines administration processes, improves membership value proposition, and simplifies marketing and communication efforts between staff, the executive team and members. ME also offers features such as a jobs portal, events and conference management.

The solution provides all the functionality required by Small, Medium and Large NFPs alike.

### **For further information**

Visit [www.membevolution.com](http://www.membevolution.com)  
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