

The Membership Management Report

THE MONTHLY IDEA SOURCE
FOR THOSE WHO RECRUIT,
MANAGE AND SERVE MEMBERS

Inside

2 Useful Analytics
Build a business intelligence plan with common software

3 Association Management Practices
Try thinking like an entrepreneur

4 Sharpen Your Skills
Learn the four core skills of facilitation

5 Growing Your Membership
Two ways to increase member referrals

6 Useful Member Resources
How to create a digital membership directory

7 Email Marketing Strategies
Distribute more emails and boost your marketing success rate

8 Conference and Meeting Planning
Test new strategies for increasing meeting attendance

CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Consider the Benefits Of a Career Coach

By Erin Sandage

Achieving your career goals in the nonprofit industry takes work. A career coach can help get you to the next level.

“To be effective as professionals, we should think of our careers as a series of strategic steps leading to an ultimate, deliberate goal that aligns with our values. Otherwise, it’s just a series of jobs,” says Jaya K. Bohlmann, ICF certified coach and president and chief consultant of Designing Communication (Washington, DC). “A career coach is your guide for that strategic career journey.”

When looking for a career coach, Bohlmann suggests finding one who possesses:

- Experience in recruiting, hiring and retaining employees.
- Credentials in coaching, teaching and training.
- Excellent communication skills and conveying information tailored to each client.
- Experience in the nonprofit industry.
- Excellent follow-up skills.
- Excellent active listening skills.
- The ability to keep you on track once you’ve established both a career goal and set of goals for the coaching engagement.

“Ultimately, a coach asks the right questions to lead the client to make career choices best for them.”

Asking questions related to the points above can help ensure the career coach will be a good fit.


“Also, check your intuition and your energy level when speaking to the coach: Do you feel energized, hopeful, optimistic and ready to work? Can you imagine a career path that will meet your goals from working with this coach? Does this coach share your values for work? Also choose a coach that is flexible in their approach — many coaches are mired to templates, assessments and tools that work for some clients and situations, but not for all.”

Once the partnership begins, Bohlmann says you should expect timely responses from your coach, flexibility and an ethical approach including confidentiality. She adds a great career coach will also have superb communication that is tough on you in kind and respectful ways when needed to keep you moving toward your goals.

“Clients should expect to get from the coaching partnership what they put in — you are in charge of the coaching relationship, with the coach making sure they deliver their promised time, energy, expertise and commitment to your success.” ♦

Source: Jaya K. Bohlmann, MA, MSMOB, ACC, APR, President and Chief Consultant, Designing Communication, Washington, DC. Phone (301) 260-1960. Email: Jaya@DesigningComm.com. Website: <https://www.designingcomm.com>

Deliver Member Value With Limited Resources

 **How can small teams deliver consistent and effective value to members?**

"It depends on what your members value. Finding ways to use technology to automate processes is important when you have limited resources. Staying on top of trends in the association management space is a simple thing that can yield significant results. It's also important, as an organization, not to stay wedded to any way of doing things. If something isn't working anymore or doesn't work for the resources you have available, be courageous enough to scrap those processes in favor of a way that works for the resources you have." ♦

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USEFUL ANALYTICS

Build a Business Intelligence Plan With Common Software

By Amber Erickson

"Business intelligence in the world of membership is two-sided: the revenue-driven side including dues and also the engagement side, or how members engage with the organization and its offerings," explains Chantal Almonord, chief information and engagement officer at the Professional Society for Health Economics and Outcomes Research (ISPOR; Lawrenceville, NJ).

The key to making more intelligent business decisions is data or being able to measure your business activity — but not just the data, the insights too.

"Business intelligence gives you the ability to be more agile and see what's moving the needle," says Almonord. "We always need to look at what's happening, need to look for deeper insights into performance, and having a foundation to do that is the key to surviving."

The first step for building this foundation is agreeing on terminology. This is often a source of misunderstanding, especially across teams. Not having set definitions could impact your reporting and analysis.

The biggest misconception is that you need expensive or complicated software. Almonord suggests starting with what you have; this will help you start answering questions, getting buy-in and making a case for more budget for tools. Here's where to start:

1. Reporting within your database or AMS (association management software). Start here, but do a thorough inventory first to make sure the data is accurate. The prebuilt reports you'll get here are basic. They might answer some questions, but they won't help you understand your business beyond surface level.
2. Developing insights using Google Suite, Excel, Access, Power BI or similar tools. To dig deeper and create more organization-specific analytics, you'll need to take your data to other tools. This is where you can start getting curious and better understanding your business, like the difference in behavior of your members.
3. Using enterprise-level software. Organization-wide tools provide 360-degree views of the entire organization, with individual log-ins and dashboards. These tools are costly but can help you easily cross-reference different data sets, create visuals, and dive into "why" something is happening, across teams.
4. Improving through iteration. As you get more comfortable and familiar, you'll continually update and refine your tools and data sets.

Regardless of the tool, you need to go beyond basic reporting (or seeing what happened) to insights, which answer questions, help you understand something previously unknown and can help predict what's going to happen. This allows you to identify trends and make educated predictions about the current and future state of the business.

"What's changed? And why? Did you do something that could've led to that change?" asks Almonord. "Then encourage the behavior you like or discourage or stop the behavior you don't." The whole point here is to arm yourself with knowledge, then use that to take action. ♦

Source: Chantal Almonord, Chief Information and Engagement Officer, Professional Society for Health Economics and Outcomes Research (ISPOR), Lawrenceville, NJ. Email: calmonord@ispor.org. Website: ispor.org/home

Try Thinking Like an Entrepreneur

Most of modern life is now subscription-based. And that means constantly deciding what to join, or what memberships to cancel.

For associations, this is both a concern and an opportunity, says Brian Costanzo, national director of school and community partnerships at Build (Redwood City, CA). The concern is that for-profits and startups are offering a lower price point than a typical association. Plus, many associations' offerings can be attained through online or other local means.

But the power of associations is the community and the depth and richness of the relationships. In order to compete, Costanzo suggests association leaders start thinking like entrepreneurs.

- Don't lose your authenticity. Startups, with their subscription models, are primarily transactional. They don't have relationships like associations. Use your offering plus community as a differentiator.
- Watch and learn from the for-profit space. This is a new wave of competition that's better funded and faster moving, so don't sleep on it. Take ideas from them and implement where applicable.
- Be intentional about feedback. Don't just listen to your committees, board and invested leaders or send surveys. Instead, honor the input of the masses in the industry. Talk to the frontline employees and the 80 percent of members who aren't as vocal. Call people who didn't renew and ask why. What aren't you providing? Then do something with that feedback.
- Get to know your members. "Most associations don't truly understand their members and don't invest enough time

(at all levels) to get to know them as people first, then how they're consuming your products and offerings," says Costanzo. Be empathetic and inclusive of member's needs to understand how to keep them.

- Think of product development as a systematic process. Startups use strict processes and feedback loops to build with, not for, consumers. Associations often use opinion and the loudest voice in the room. Focus on being more strategic and building alongside your members based on their feedback.
- Embrace staff's gut instincts and listen to the quiet voices. It may not be data-backed, but sometimes it's worth the risk. Find ways to build trust in the process, and always get the input of the quietest stakeholders.
- Remove product silos. Associations don't have product development teams, so you have to create ways to manage products and releases holistically. Assemble a cross-functional committee to have oversight and reduce the risk of nonconnected offerings that impact member value. And put finance at the forefront. Their input is vital to the budgeting and forecasting component of member offerings.
- Startups fail fast so they can find what works. Take a page out of their book by building a culture where you move quickly, test hypotheses and sunset offerings that don't provide member value. ♦

Source: Brian Costanzo, CAE, National Director, School and Community Partnerships, Build, Redwood City, CA. Phone (571) 243-1152. Email: bcostanzo@build.org. Website: build.org

EVALUATING MEMBER DUES

Time to Consider a Change To Your Member Dues?

If you're looking to grow and better engage your audience, it may be time to take a fresh look at your dues structure.

"Rethinking dues involves understanding your audiences, their needs and their ability to pay," says Sheri Jacobs, CEO and president of Avenue M Group. "Matching pricing to perceived value can strengthen engagement and retention."

Jacobs shares four key considerations when evaluating potential changes to your dues structure:

1. **Clarify your goals.** Are you trying to expand reach and exposure or boost membership and retention? Adding free or low-cost subscription tiers can broaden your audience. However, converting nonpayers to full members may reduce nondues revenue. Define the core objectives up front.
2. **Understand perceived value.** Survey members on what

they find most useful and where you deliver unique value. For instance, they may want easier access to resources via mobile devices rather than dense PDF reports. Align dues with desired forms of value access.

3. **Consider ability to pay.** Can your audience afford increased dues? Analyze their memberships in other groups. A one-size-fits-all approach may not work if budgets are stretched. A tiered model can improve affordability.
4. **Solve key member problems.** Map their journey to see pain points. Then showcase how your benefits address those challenges at each step. Let value drive pricing, not the reverse. ♦

Source: Sheri Jacobs, FASAE, CAE, CEO and President, Avenue M Group. Phone (773) 862-0666. Email: jacobs@avenuemgroup.com. Website: avenuemgroup.com

Learn the Four Core Skills of Facilitation

Does this sound familiar? A team enters a conference room with hopes to make progress on a specified plan or issue only to leave an hour later right where they started. This outcome may be the result of a lack of shared intentions, too many divisive perspectives or something else. If only someone was on hand to navigate obstacles and keep everyone on the same page — next time, consider bringing in a facilitator.

“Simply put, a facilitator is someone who can help a group achieve their goals,” says James S. DeLizia, principal, DeLizia Consulting Services (Burbank, CA). “As membership organizations, associations make decisions by consensus and engagement, and facilitation skills are therefore critical.” Organizations that carve out space for this talent in-house as part of staff capacity stand to benefit greatly — after all, focused and aligned teams will save time and avoid trouble down the road.

It’s important to note even people with exceptional interpersonal skills will still need to learn how to own the room. According to DeLizia, facilitators are able to:

- Structure an opportunity in which participants can understand, explore and apply information or concepts.
- Create an open environment in which participants are comfortable sharing their ideas and experience.
- Ensure all perspectives and thoughts are heard and considered.
- Keep participants focused so that session outcomes can be achieved.
- Manage group dynamics to keep the discussion positive and productive and to ensure that all participate.
- Listen for and summarize common thoughts and ideas and move the group toward a decision, action or other appropriate conclusion.
- Reinforce the value of the information and participation to the individual, the group and the organization overall.

Those who effectively juggle these seven roles clearly possess an understanding of the facilitation skill set, the core skills of which include:

1. Probing
 - Make sure each individual has a chance to contribute.
 - Clarify comments as needed.
 - Gather additional information; ask for more details.
 - Ask questions that solicit information or contributions from quieter participants at their level of comfort.
 - Validate all feelings and experiences shared.
 - Ask questions designed to solicit responses or discussion related to the point of the discussion.
 - Determine root causes of problems or issues.
 - Explore what can be learned from positive or negative experiences.
2. Synthesizing
 - Highlight common thoughts and ideas among the group.

- Build toward solutions by linking participants’ contributions.
 - Combine participants’ thoughts and ideas to support key points or generate greater insight into or understanding of the issue being discussed.
3. Bridging
 - Focus on the positive aspects of what *can* be accomplished; rephrase a negative comment to open up discussion.
 - Rephrase or relate comments to the point under the discussion.
 - Encourage participants to apply the information shared to solving problems or achieving goals of the discussion.
 - Stress the value of the discussion and participant involvement.
 4. Active or Reflective Listening
 - Demonstrate empathy — understand how a person thinks *and* feels.
 - Make no judgment of others’ views or feelings.
 - Listen first to understand before responding.
 - Absorb words, tone and body language (e.g., listen with eyes, ears and heart).
 - Rephrase to check, acknowledge and show understanding.
 - Be patient, attentive and caring.

To master these core skills and emerge a strong facilitator, one must practice often. “I call facilitation skills ‘stand up’ skills, because they are practiced with groups and in the moment,” DeLizia says. “You can never fully prepare for what a group might come up with in a discussion, so the facilitator has to be able to listen, bridge, synthesize and probe in real time.” Beginner facilitators should start by tackling subject matter that’s already familiar to them while in the presence of supportive groups. “With every experience, a facilitator will gain confidence,” DeLizia attests. ♦

Source: James S. DeLizia, CAE, Principal, DeLizia Consulting Services, Burbank, CA. Phone (818) 559-3620. Email: jim@deliziaconsultingservices.com. Website: <https://deliziaconsultingservices.com>

BRIEFS

Recruitment Idea ...

Want others to take an interest in becoming members? Don’t be shy about encouraging existing members to toot their own horns.

Encourage your members to regularly add a “P.S.” to business and personal correspondence: E.g., “Just in case you don’t know it, I’m proud to tell you that I’m a member of (Organization) and encourage you to consider becoming a member as well.” ♦

Take Steps to Break Apart Cliques

By Kim Pawlak

It's natural people tend to gravitate to others when in groups, but it's important you're not introducing "groupthink," says Brian Riggs, CEO of Enterprise Corporation (Mullica Hill, NJ).

"As humans, we want to be around individuals or groups of individuals with whom we feel we have a connection, but there's business to be done, so in official meetings it's the facilitator's responsibility to ensure they're removing opportunities for cliques to gather," he says. "This can be as simple as not sitting certain people together."

He shares other ways to challenge cliques and groupthink:

- Deal with it head on. "Say something such as, 'We've heard from Susan. What we'd like, Bill, is to hear something different from you. How does that look? What does it feel like? What's your opinion on this?'" Invite ground rules at the beginning of meetings as a basic best practice, but also be sure to say, "Everyone contributes, and everyone is heard."
- Respect their leadership and experience. Position the discussion at the right level to obtain maximum input. Ensure you provide the right level of materials so they are not starting cold or feel you have already made the decision. Also ensure they are addressing areas of their expertise and not areas that should be handled by staff.
- Know their strengths. Review your board of director members prior to the discussion in anticipation of the input they

will provide. For example, if you know someone may react negatively to a topic or go against a potential decision, call them in advance to obtain their insight so you can better facilitate it in a live environment.

- At the first meeting where new board members attend, ask existing members to describe the culture of the board in one word or short phrase. Put those descriptions up, and then say, "I want to make sure that we're not missing anything, and I would love to address an age-old problem here in the association space, which is, 'How do we make these new board members feel included?'"

"It's really important that no one is left out of conversations," he says. "Be intentional about it. I don't think people have time for anything less than being very intentional about disrupting legacy cultures and legacy behaviors. Anytime I'm working with a group and this whole clique culture scenario comes up, that's identified as Problem A. Problem B is, 'Why can't we find any more volunteer leaders?' Go back to Problem A." ♦

Sources: Brian Riggs, CEO, Riggs Enterprise Corporation, Mullica Hill, NJ. Phone (856) 816-3928. Email: brian@riggsenterprise.com. Website: <https://www.riggsenterprise.com>

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GROWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Two Ways to Increase Member Referrals

The American Urological Association's (AUA) Member-Get-a-Member (MGM) referral program brings in about 500 new member referrals every year. The large number of quality recruitment leads can be attributed to how networking and mentorship are inherent to the urological professional culture but also how easy the program is to use and its incentives.

- **Make it easy.** The AUA provides an automated email system that lets members send personalized messages to a colleague encouraging them to apply for membership. "By simply typing in the name and contact information for the colleague they wish to refer, an email addressed to the individual is generated, letting them know the name of the member who is inviting them to join the AUA," says Amanda Burns, AUA member engagement and marketing specialist. "The email highlights key member benefits and includes a link to apply online with a reminder to list their colleague's name in the referral field on the application."
- **Tie incentives to recognition.** Burns says MGM was

launched more than 15 years ago to thank members for spreading the word. Incentives include being listed on the website as a participant, a T-shirt, a thank-you gift at the AUA annual meeting and a chance to win one of three travel stipends. The AUA also recognizes the Referrer of the Quarter, the member who refers the greatest number of members each quarter, on the website as well as via the AUA's social media channels.

"We have solicited videos for social media from individuals sharing what they like most about being a member and/or why they refer their colleagues for membership. For us, this has been a great way to simultaneously thank our top referrers while promoting the benefits of belonging to the association. It also helps us as an organization better understand what our members value and what may influence prospects to join." ♦

Source: Amanda Burns, Member Engagement and Marketing Specialist, American Urological Association, Linthicum, MD. Phone (410) 689-4044. Email: aburns@AUAnet.org. Website: AUAnet.org

USEFUL MEMBER RESOURCES

How to Create a Digital Membership Directory

Online membership directories can be valuable resources to members but take considerable time, effort and money to create.

Patrick Algyer, chief strategist and owner at Encore Engagement Solutions LLC (Falls Church, VA), works with associations, like the Northern Virginia Apartment Association, to create effective member directories. He offers the following steps to write, design and publish a member directory members will use:

1. Define the scope and objective of the directory clearly. What are you trying to achieve? Why are you making a directory?
2. Involve members in the design and development of the directory. Your first decision is what the directory includes. Always feature members and their information, but you might also include information about the association, like the history, mission/vision, current board of directors, committee members, etc. Plus, you might also include ways to be more involved, upcoming event information, etc.
3. Choose a format that is user-friendly, accessible and attractive. It may be a printable digital book, a landing page on your website or an interactive app. But also decide whether you'll sell advertising within the directory to boost non-dues revenue.
4. Ensure the quality and consistency of the information. Update as often as you need, perhaps based on how

frequently your members' information changes. However, you'll also want to consider how easy your directory is to edit and maintain. Algyer says: "I am an advocate of publishing annually as there are always members joining and leaving the organization, and it's important to ensure the directory is as up-to-date as possible."

5. Promote the directory regularly. It's not useful if members don't know it exists. Be sure every member sees the guide during orientation, but also link to and feature it regularly in your communications. Also make it easy for members to update their information and remind them regularly to do so.
6. Measure the impact of your directory through the number of views, downloads, shares or referrals generated by the directory. Anecdotally, feedback from members and users can also indicate value.

When it comes time to actually create the directory, Algyer suggests considering working with a third party that sells the advertisements, publishes the digital and print versions and provides a share of the ad revenue. "The big lift is on them, but we reap the benefits," says Algyer. ♦

Source: Patrick Algyer, Chief Strategist and Owner, Encore Engagement Solutions LLC, Falls Church, VA. Email: Patrick@encoreengagement.com. Website: encoreengagement.com

MEMBER NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

Groups Exchange Leads and Business Referrals

A leads group provides opportunities for chamber members to connect with other business leaders within the community. The goal is to share best practices and create new personal and professional relationships so members feel comfortable sharing referrals.

Melinda Baker Trotman, membership director at the Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce (Tallahassee, FL), outlines how their successful leads groups work and the benefits they provide to the chamber:

- Groups of 20 to 30 members meet every other week. Groups are made up of varying industries but only one industry per group. A group may have one business banker and one personal banker, for example, but only if they serve different customers. The same group of people meet consistently.
- There are attendance requirements; members must send a suitable substitute if they cannot attend.
- The chamber provides the blueprint for the groups, but they ultimately act autonomously and govern themselves.
- Each meeting has a similar agenda: It starts with a welcome; each member then has 45 seconds to talk about

themselves and their business or make an ask, like wanting an introduction to a new business owner. Often there's then a 10-minute presentation from a member about a certain topic or upcoming event.

- Members are encouraged to have one-on-one meetings outside of meetings. Social events are scheduled in addition to regular meetings to help further build relationships.
- Revenue is tracked so members can see the return on investment of the group and those referrals. "The goal is to have second- and third-degree referrals, beyond just the members of the group," says Baker Trotman.

According to Baker Trotman, the leads groups are a member benefit for chamber members. Only members can participate, and, given the success of the groups, it's a tangible return on time and investment. Occasionally members will invite non-members to be their substitute, which is a great way to introduce prospective members to the value of membership. ♦

Source: Melinda Baker Trotman, Membership Director, Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce, Tallahassee, FL. Phone (850) 224-8116. Email: mbaker@talchamber.com. Website: talchamber.com

Distribute More Emails And Boost Your Marketing Success Rate

When their email marketing performance goes down slightly, or they see an uptick in their unsubscribes, many association marketers tend to make the catastrophic mistake of thinking they are sending out too many emails and start sending out fewer, says Jay Schwedelson, president and CEO of Outcome Media (Boca Raton, FL).

“You’re not going to get more sales, engagement or members by sending out fewer emails,” he says. “That’s bad math. The most frequent senders happen to also be the most successful email marketers. Unsubscribes are actually a good thing, not a bad thing. The reason why is that, generally speaking, when you test something new, people tend to notice your emails for the first time. They open them up and think, ‘You know what? This no longer applies to me because I’m doing a different job,’ and they

unsubscribe. Marketers look at that and say, ‘My unsubscribes went up when I tested that new idea; I must have done something wrong,’ but it’s the exact opposite. Unsubscribes went up because you did something right. You stood out.”

So the idea that you have to scale back how much you’re sending, and that’s going to be a recipe for success and growth, is really not the right mindset, says Schwedelson. In fact, he says, you need to be sending out more, as long as it’s relevant: “Relevancy is the key to everything. You can’t send out garbage that nobody’s interested in. But assuming you’re sending out relevant content, relevancy is your ticket to sending out more, and sending out more is your ticket to overall success.” ♦

Source: Jay Schwedelson, President and CEO, Outcome Media, Boca Raton, FL. Email: JayS@Corpwd.com. Website: <https://jayschwedelson.com/>

Get the Most Bang for Your AI Buck

Artificial intelligence (AI) and its practical business uses is a hot topic. According to McKinley Advisors’ report Major Trends Expected to Impact Associations, it’s one of the top trends CEOs think will impact associations over the next 5 to 10 years.

Patrick Glaser, chief practice officer for McKinley Advisors (Washington, DC), says there will be lots of experimentation with AI and many new applications over the next few years, making it difficult for associations to know where to invest their AI dollars. He adds AI has a role internally, like making processes that support members, and externally, like in the fields or professionals the associations represent.

“Associations would be well served to consider both of these lenses and prepare a strategy for how to engage,” he explains.

“One valid strategy is to look where your biggest priority is today. Are you most involved in providing education and training as an association? If so, what tools are being developed or available today to support the delivery of education? What is on the horizon? As a community, we need to be very conscious of the faster pace of change and nontraditional competitors that are disrupting our business models. AI is a technology that has the potential to be exactly that, and a great place to start is to examine the core priorities in your business model and strategy for the coming several years — where can AI play a role?” ♦

Source: Patrick Glaser, MA, MPA, Chief Practice Officer, McKinley Advisors, Washington, DC. Email: connect@mckinley-advisors.com. Website: www.mckinley-advisors.com

Get More Value Out of Sponsorships

Rather than just asking for money once a year, consider better leveraging your sponsor relationships. Edward Byers, founder of CANRev Collaborative (Toronto, Ontario, Canada), says the key is finding more value on both sides. “If you go after sponsorships, flip the script and make sure companies know why it’s valuable to sponsor you. It’s competitive so you need a compelling value prop and will need to deliver on the objectives,” explains Byers.

Often sponsorships are episodic, like a meeting or annual event. But you can get more non-dues revenue out of sponsorships while satisfying other organizational needs by thinking bigger. Think first about how sponsors can provide more value

to your association. Can you bundle sponsorship at multiple events? Can you incorporate more sponsors as speakers or subject matter experts in your programming or marketing content? Are sponsors willing to participate on committees or task forces? Is there a way to package sponsors’ knowledge or industry expertise in a way that serves your members?

Just make sure the value goes both ways. “Sponsorship dollars have limits,” says Byers. “They need value and to demonstrate ROI, so you have to be able to deliver on that value.” ♦

Source: Edward Byers, Founder, CANRev Collaborative, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Phone (416) 737-7424. Email: Edward@canrevcollab.com. Website: canrevcollab.com

MEMBER DUES

How to Communicate A Membership Dues Increase

The International Legal Technology Association (Chicago, IL), which has a calendar year organizational membership dues structure, increases its membership dues each year, giving all members the opportunity to renew before December 31 at the current year's rates.

They communicate the membership dues increase by emailing a notice of the following year rates to all members (sometimes the decision-maker is not the primary/billing contact), include information on the discounted rate if renewed before December 31 and inform them of the new rates for the following year effective January 1, says Jeanne Martinez, director of membership and volunteer operations. They then prepare an early renewal invoice with the discounted rate and send it to the

billing contacts and copy the primary contacts.

Those members who don't renew by January 1 are emailed updated invoices with the new renewal rates, she says: "We do have a three-month grace period for them to pay their renewal so at the beginning of March, we send out a paper invoice to the few who have not yet paid. On April 1, when they've completely expired, a \$100 reinstatement fee is added to their invoice, which remains in our system. We then do individual outreach to expired members." ♦

Source: Jeanne Martinez, Director of Membership and Volunteer Operations, International Legal Technology Association, Chicago, IL. Phone (512) 795-4663. Email: jeanne@iltanet.org. Website: <https://www.iltanet.org/home>

CONFERENCE AND MEETING PLANNING

Test New Strategies For Increasing Member Attendance

Q Can you describe one strategy you have used that increased member attendance for your annual meeting or conference? What did it require, and how did it work?

"The South Carolina Association of CPAs hosts the Fall Fest Accounting Conference each year, which historically attracts between 400 and 420 CPAs. This year, we experienced a 20 percent increase in registrations. In addition to our regular tactics, we added a Fall Fest Presents blog series. In this series, several of our presenters submitted session summaries with an invitation to attend, which were disseminated through social media and our weekly e-newsletter. After each installation, we observed a marked increase in registrations. Additionally, we sent personalized email invitations to previous attendees, new members and nonmembers, which attracted several first-time attendees. With more than 500 registrations (more than 10 percent of our membership), Fall Fest broke records, and we look forward to building on that momentum."

— Liz Peuster, CAE, Director of Communications & Public Relations, South Carolina Association of CPAs, Columbia, SC. Email: epeuster@scacpa.org. Website: www.scacpa.org

"The Pennsylvania School Boards Association prepared and distributed targeted e-blasts to various subgroups of our membership:

- One targeted to school districts that did participate in conference in 2020 (virtual), 2021 (virtual) or 2022 but didn't have anyone registered for this year's conference yet.

- One targeted to school districts that attended in 2018 or 2019 but haven't been back since COVID-related cancellations in 2020 and 2021.
- One targeted to school districts that attended in 2022 but were not yet registered for 2023.

We also did geographically based e-blasts to those who were within a one- to two-hour drive from the event location. This required us to draft specific language to each targeted group and pull a specific corresponding list from our database. We were able to track the open rate via the email platform as well as track registration counts before and after the send dates to see if there was any increase in attendance. We did receive some responses from those who hadn't attended for a while. Most had legitimate reasons for missing the conference, such as budget cuts or scheduling conflicts, but they appreciated that we'd taken notice of their absence."

Jennifer Cramer, CMP, Director of Conferences and Events, Philadelphia School Boards Association, Mechanicsburg, PA. Phone (717) 506-2450, ext. 3332. Email: jennifer.cramer@psba.org. Website: <https://www.psba.org/>

"Partner with a larger organization that has an email list of the audience you want to target and have that organization send the email invites. They are a trusted sender, so it's more likely that people will open the invites." ♦

—Andrea McMakin, Communications Provider, Grace Clinic, Kennewick, WA. Email: andream@GraceClinicOnline.org. Website: www.GraceClinicOnline.org