

# *the* Membership Management *report*

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

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## Forge Long-Term Relationship With New Businesses

When a new business opens, do you step up as a representative of a membership organization to ask the owner or manager for something (e.g., membership, sponsorship, in-kind support)?

Distinguish your organization from the rest by taking steps to establish a positive long-term relationship rather than running the risk of offending them with a premature ask.

To solidify a positive relationship with your community's new businesses:

1. Ask your employees to attend the business's grand opening. Have them wear name tags or logo clothing that identifies the organization you represent.
2. Send a personal letter of welcome to the business owner or manager with no strings attached.
3. Host a quarterly breakfast or lunch for community newcomers. Use the occasion to provide a tour of your facilities and offer guests a small memento.
4. If the business executive is new to town, offer to schedule time to introduce him or her to community leaders.
5. Invite the new owner or manager to accompany you as a guest to civic organizations to which you belong (e.g., chamber of commerce, Rotary, Sertoma, Optimists Club).

## MEMBER CHAPTERS

## Evaluate Your Current Chapters Program

It's common for associations to label chapters as expenses rather than assets. But it is more likely that the opposite is true.

Leadership Strategist Cynthia D'Amour has spent more than 20 years helping leaders get more members involved in associations. She says in the past, associations had a monopoly on the information members couldn't get anywhere else. That has changed. Now, information and many experts are only a click away.

"When associations understand how important chapters are to them, they can then also understand the importance of being able to prove why chapters need them," D'Amour explains. "Taking time to determine the value of chapters can be eye-opening for your staff and your boards. It also makes it easier to justify making supporting chapters the priority it should be."

One way to do this is to determine the value a chapter has to your organization. D'Amour says some simple things to look at include:

- Cost to put staff in the locations of the chapters so the association has a voice in the area.
- Cost of staff programming for local members.
- Cost to hire a PR agency or social media team to cover local issues and events.
- Impact on lifetime value of member. (Members active in chapters renew at higher rates as a general rule.)
- Impact on donations to foundations and association causes.
- Impact on recruitment (lifetime value of new members recruited by chapters and cost of staff to do same recruiting).
- Cost to recruit future national leaders and train future national leaders to replace the experiences and skills they learn serving at a chapter level.
- Cost to replace lobbying/advocacy effort in all the states where chapters exist.

Yet D'Amour says there are other times when a chapter isn't bringing value to an association. This can be identified by membership numbers, chapter activities, member engagement and membership renewals.

"One common challenge happens when the chapter leadership team embraces a martyr culture. They complain that nobody wants to help, yet don't want to change how they do anything. This is a member repellent and as a result, decreases the value impact of their chapter," says D'Amour. "The second big challenge is the association, and chapter leaders need to know how to help leaders get beyond, 'We've always done it that way.' Their commitment to the past is a threat to the future of the association."

D'Amour's Facebook group page has dozens of free videos that can help association leaders shift strategies and lead their leaders. It can be found at [www.facebook.com/groups/PPUcommunity](http://www.facebook.com/groups/PPUcommunity).

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## Create Buddy System For New, Veteran Members

If your organization has a large influx of new members, consider asking longtime members to show newcomers the ropes by creating a buddy system.

Whether you pair up members one-to-one or assign one current member to a handful of new ones, involving your current membership will aid your staff in acclimating new members more quickly.

Who better to show off the wonderful opportunities open to new members than those who have already experienced them? Your vested members can provide firsthand accounts of events, membership committees and benefit availability while creating an important networking link and offering a familiar face to your incoming members.

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## Analyze Your Professional Development Offerings

Do you strive to provide members with tools that they can't find anywhere else? Recent studies reveal that association members find significant value in professional development offerings such as continuing education courses, credentialing programs and mentorships. After you equip these opportunities, it's important to understand how your audience perceives these goods and services.

"Design thinking is a hot topic in the association world because it's a process which helps organizations think more deliberately about member needs and how they can deliver relevant and inspired resources," says Founder and President of Event Garde, LLC (Kalamazoo, MI) Aaron Wolowiec. "Journey mapping is one design thinking tool that leads organizations to achieve better outcomes across programs, products and services for their constituents."

A member's professional development experience can be journey mapped in three steps:

1. Choose the member segment and professional development experience to map.
2. Define each of the activities and steps for that segment in the experience.
3. Determine each of the emotional highs and lows for that segment.

"Journey mapping is an incredibly simple, yet impactful tool," Wolowiec says. "It allows you to consider every touchpoint that your member experiences along their journey with your association, from your marketing materials to your website, to their time spent at your annual meeting." Once you have developed a clear "journey" for each offering and its associated member segment, use those findings to improve services with low emotional impact.

Wolowiec reveals how journey mapping can enhance your professional development offerings:

1. **Reveals highs and lows.** Through journey mapping, associations can identify the emotional highs and lows each member segment experiences with a particular professional development offering. "If you've identified a low point, such as onsite registration experience, for a specific type of member at your annual conference, like speakers, you can funnel your energy and resources into that area to ignite positive transformation," Wolowiec says. "This might include a red-carpet VIP express one, complete with a speaker swag bag or care package."
2. **Informs communications.** If member activity suggests that certain offerings are underused, journey mapping might inform new opportunities and touchpoints based on an organization's available communication assets for marketing programs to the members who are most likely to derive value.
3. **Improves data collection.** "There's often an affinity to address the loudest concern or member suggestion, but that's only because most associations fear they lack the data to best inform decision making," Wolowiec says. "Journey mapping helps associations refocus their limited time, attention and resources by leveraging member data and trends."
4. **Ignites volunteer task forces.** Most professional development offerings can be improved with beta testers or the input of industry experts. Journey mapping will reveal the areas that can be improved before, during and after the program via the input of volunteer task forces who have firsthand knowledge of your product.
5. **Promotes proactive behavior.** "You don't have to wait for an order from the executive director before you start mapping a member's experience," Wolowiec says. "This simple approach allows leaders from all areas of the organization to come to the table with valuable information that propels powerful decisions moving forward."

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## Give Members a Variety of Options

If you're only offering one type of membership option, you could be missing out on recruiting potential members.

"By offering a portfolio of membership options to members, you're giving them the ability to pick the package to best suit their needs and budgets," says Amanda Myers, director of product marketing, member solutions at Community Brands (St. Petersburg, FL). "These can help boost membership engagement, membership numbers and overall revenue."

Myers says there are many types of membership models, but the five she sees most frequently are tiering, segments, "freemium," à la carte and group. She explains that each comes with its own set of benefits:

- **Tiering:** This is a more traditional model. It allows for benefits to increase with each tier and/or the price. Myers says it aligns benefits in tiers, which are attractive and accessible to members. "You're not only retaining members but you're eventually (as they become more engaged) giving them opportunities to be more involved with the organization and remit more money in dues."
- **Segments:** This model focuses on target-specific segments or membership audiences with offers designed to appeal to unique attributes, especially those of younger members, says Myers. "We see the most differentiation with these younger members regarding unique needs and preferences. Our research shows they value benefits closely aligned to the needs of someone who wants to build critical momentum early in a career. If you have a student membership, a next step aligned with those needs becomes powerful."
- **Freemium:** This type of membership allows associations to expand their reach by offering lower-value benefits for free to attract new members and then convert them to paid membership. Myers says freemium models also have a high relevance to younger members, who like to "try before they buy." "If you have a benefit you feel is a hidden gem — you know it provides value but it doesn't get the spotlight — include it in a freemium to get more people involved," she adds.
- **À la Carte:** This allows members to self-select bundles based on groupings of benefits most attractive to them. Myers advises that this is a great way to strengthen retention because members get to choose what's valuable to them from the very first interaction.
- **Group:** A group membership offers value differentiation for individual members and organizations. Myers says this type of membership has a perceived cost savings; simplifies enrollment for individuals; ensures engagement even in the event of staff turnover; and is easier to manage, as there is only one point of contact.

*Source: Amanda Myers, Director of Product Marketing, Member Solutions, Community Brands, St. Petersburg, FL. Phone (727) 827-0046. E-mail: [amanda.myers@abila.com](mailto:amanda.myers@abila.com). Website: [www.communitybrands.com](http://www.communitybrands.com)*

## Encourage Members To Host a Reception

Imagine what you could accomplish if 50 loyal members each hosted a meal or reception at their homes or places of work on behalf of your organization, inviting their friends, relatives and associates.

Think of the tremendous outreach potential of such an effort. Now make it happen with these steps:

1. Develop a prototype that can be duplicated by others. Work with a handful of current members willing to host an event. Explain that in addition to helping them coordinate their event, you plan to use them as an example for others to emulate.
2. Record as you execute. As you assist your initial hosts, assemble a how-to procedural document that others can use. Include sample invitations, checklists, catering menus/costs and so forth that can be used as a guide by future hosts.
3. Invite your entire membership to get involved. Publicize your prototype events. Show others how they work and how those events are helping your organization. Make it as easy as possible for would-be hosts to follow suit.

## Which Membership Model Is Right for You?

While offering multiple membership options is a great idea, there are some things to consider when deciding which model is right for your association.

Amanda Myers, director of product marketing, member solutions, Community Brands (St. Petersburg, FL), suggests associations take the following five steps:

1. **Find your focus.** "What are you hoping your new membership model will achieve? Improve retention or drive growth among a segment?"
2. **Set meaningful goals.** "While each organization has a strategic focus for a new membership model, what are the specific goals (or meaningful metrics) you can tie back to them to measure success?" These can include goals to increase profitability, improve cashflow, expand market penetration, grow a larger market share, increase revenue per customer, beat the competition, fill capacity and utilize resources, introduce new products, reach a new segment and increase prospect presence and conversion.
3. **Clearly communicate value.** "Understand why, what and how members value membership with your organization. What are their biggest goals? What are their biggest pain points? What are competitors saying? How are competitors' membership offers presented and priced?"
4. **Troubleshoot.** "Once an organization introduces a new model, make sure it's performing as expected. If it isn't, then understand why. General reasons may include that pricing isn't in line with member expectations, the offer isn't in line with member expectations and members are unaware of new offers. Is there unanticipated (negative) impact to other membership offers?"
5. **Measure and adjust.** "Review priorities, original goals and progress at timed intervals."

## Engage Members In Your Annual Membership Effort

Word-of-mouth is the most powerful marketing tool available; people will always trust the word of a friend or family member over anything else.

The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Fort Worth, TX) used this powerful marketing tool in its fall 2017 membership drive.

“We know that in the greater Dallas/Fort Worth area, word-of-mouth is the number-one way people make decisions to visit a museum. Considering the demographic of the Modern Contemporaries membership group — men and women under the age of 40 — it made sense to indirectly connect with potential new members through our current membership base,” says Sonya Cisneros, membership/special events manager.

The museum’s membership drive rewards current and lapsed members for recruiting friends and family. If a recruit puts the member’s name and a promotion code on the sign-up form, the member receives a point. The more points earned, the greater the reward.

“This campaign formalizes what is already happening organically with this group and provides a sense of ownership among members, as they are soliciting friends to join who they will be attending events with,” says Cisneros.

Rewards include complimentary film tickets for the museum’s theater, which brings awareness to the museum; a reusable cup, the only way to enjoy a beverage in the theater; a free T-shirt, which is essentially free advertising; and a grand prize that includes a brunch at the museum’s café and movie tickets for six.

“We thought of zero- to low-cost items to provide as incentives that would also serve to connect the member to the museum,” says Cisneros. “The idea for the grand prize was to create a relatively low-cost experience for a group of friends with the hope that they begin to consider the museum first when making weekend plans. Each incentive is meant to keep the Modern top-of-mind.”

Cisneros says they got the word out to members through e-mail blasts, with the first sent right after the kick-off event to build off of the excitement. A follow-up e-mail was sent a month after — it had a 43.2 percent open rate. As the campaign continues, e-mails will begin to list the names of members in the running for the grand prize and simultaneously promote gift memberships.

As a further incentive, both the member and the recruit receive a free month’s membership for signing up.

*Source: Sonya Cisneros, Membership/Special Events Manager, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, TX. Phone (817) 840-2115. E-mail: [sonya@themodern.org](mailto:sonya@themodern.org). Website: [www.themodern.org](http://www.themodern.org)*

## Six Sponsorship Ideas Worth Exploring

Sponsorship dollars are the lifeblood of chambers of commerce nationwide. While traditional sponsorship benefits like tables and customized signage will always be utilized, thinking outside the box can drive revenue in big ways.

Are you missing out on new hits by only playing the standards? Senior Vice President of the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE) Chris Mead believes you might be. “Chambers need money to operate and in that way, they are no different than other non-profit organizations,” Mead says. “They got into the sponsorship game a little earlier than most other groups simply because their members are companies, which provide the lion’s share of sponsorships.”

Access to corporate dollars has caused some to rest on their laurels, but in his 15 years of experience working with chambers, Mead has witnessed exceptionally creative sponsorships. Here are six ideas worth exploring:

1. **Mobile charging stations.** Interactive apps and note-taking can drain phone batteries during conferences. Greater Louisville, Inc. (KY) solves this problem by offering a single mobile charging station sponsorship for \$25,000. The charging station travels to chamber events throughout the year, making sure that the corporate sponsor’s logo gets maximum exposure, and attendees never have to worry about going in the red.
2. **Celebrity chef contest.** The Greater Hot Springs (AR) Chamber of Commerce hosts an annual competition event in which a local celebrity chef competes against an amateur. Up to 100 attendees can reserve a seat for \$50 each. This event boasts two \$5,000 presenting sponsors and three to five \$1,000 sponsors, for sponsorship revenues of up to \$15,000.
3. **“YP”-targeted luncheon.** Young professionals head back to class when The Greensboro (NC) Chamber of Commerce hosts their Adulting 101 series at a sponsoring school. During these one-hour sessions, attendees learn about topics that affect them most, such as The Language of Investing, Salary Negotiations and First-Time Home Buying. The sponsorship nets around \$5,000 over six sessions.
4. **Food truck rally.** A summit breakfast got new wheels when the Boise Metro (ID) Chamber of Commerce converted their annual meeting into an outdoor “food truck rally.” Each food truck was sponsored by a separate company and many participating food trucks came on as new members, serving up almost \$35,000 in new revenue.
5. **Play “Chamber-opoly.”** Waterbury Regional (CT) Chamber of Commerce “passed Go” and collected \$60,000 when they transformed a room into a Monopoly-style game featuring familiar locations and community landmarks. The revenue raised from games played at this family-friendly event was used to restore a historic clock.
6. **Steak fry.** To engage past presidents, the Ames (IA) Chamber of Commerce hosts an annual steak fry, in which former leaders “grill and chill” with current members and community folk. A local grocery store donates steaks and salads, which are then prepared by past presidents, whose companies sponsor the event. A live band and social atmosphere provides fun networking opportunities on-site, while raising a smoking \$15,000 for the hosting chamber.

*Source: Chris Mead, Senior Vice President, Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives. Phone (703) 998-3545. E-mail: [cmead@acce.org](mailto:cmead@acce.org). Website: [www.acce.org](http://www.acce.org)*

## Create a Master Story for Your Organization

Who are you? It is a simple question that countless nonprofits struggle to answer. While a mission statement demonstrates what an organization strives to be, it does not reveal the unique properties that define their existence at present. A perfect “master story” cuts through the noise to connect people to the organization and allows them to understand how the association is working on their behalf; the master story describes who they are, right here and right now.

“The members are the key to your story — not the association,” says Vice President of Marketing, Membership and Communications for the International Sign Association (ISA; Alexandria, VA) Alicia Auerswald. “Use them to tell the master story in different ways by highlighting the challenges they face and how your organization helps them overcome these barriers.”

Auerswald outlines four steps in the creation of a master story:

1. Define what makes you unique.
2. Ensure ownership throughout the organization.
3. Gather stories and start telling them.
4. Don't do it alone.

ISA enlisted Master Storyteller and Consultant Seth Kahan to help them draft their master story. ISA serves its members by acting as a liaison with local planners to improve sign codes in their regions. “We took a highly technical manual — aimed at a key influencer group — and incorporated case studies that supported our master story,” Auerswald says. “Those case studies featured industry peers, which gave us instant credibility. It kept the focus off us and put it on people they knew, creating an open door for many communities to adopt our recommended guidelines.” By gathering specific examples of how their guidance led communities to adopt standards that improved the life of local residents, ISA is now able to tell an accurate and complete story of who they are to their most valuable constituents.

“The biggest challenge will occur in defining the story, as there has to be an agreement on what that is and everyone will bring their own ideas to the table,” Auerswald says. “There may be a temptation to bring that back inside what the association does, but remember, it's the members that drive the story — think ‘you,’ not ‘us.’”

Staff and leaders play a lead role in uncovering these member-focused success stories. “Every member touchpoint by staff and leaders is an opportunity to find a good story,” Auerswald says. “Staff and leaders are guaranteed to generate far more touchpoints than the marketing team alone.” For this reason, Auerswald suggests taking extra time to get your entire staff involved in the storytelling process. “Get buy-in and accountability from leadership and set up a clear method for staff to share story tips with marketing and communications.”

*Source: Alicia Auerswald, Vice President, Marketing, Membership and Communications, International Sign Association, Alexandria, VA. Phone (703) 836-4071. E-mail: [alicia.auerswald@signs.org](mailto:alicia.auerswald@signs.org). Website: [www.signs.org](http://www.signs.org)*

## First the Slow Dance, Then the Kiss

Looking for ways to get members more involved? Ask them what they're thinking.

When a Texas organization needed to add members to one of its more active committees, staff gathered members with expertise in marketing, finance and other areas and asked them to attend a meeting to contribute their ideas about a particular issue.

No requests were made for long-term commitments, only ideas.

As participants became more familiar with the organization's goals and needs, they became engaged and began to assume more ownership of issues at hand. Eventually, they were asked to join the committee and agreed to take on a more active role.

Whether looking for new board members or volunteers, it's wise to identify appropriate individuals first, seek their advice and then involve them in a more formal way.

## Coordinate a Variety Of Mobile Field Trips

Looking for fun ways to educate your members? Don't limit the traditional field trip to a bus tour. Consider these and other possibilities:

- **Coordinate bicycle outings.** Whether you want to tour local architecture, visit your city's parks or take other short-distance trips, invite members to meet at a designated location to bike to particular locations as a group.
- **Set up walking tours.** As popular as walking has become in recent years, why not set up a walk with a number of stopping points along the way?
- **Invite all cyclists.** Offer a day-long trip for motorcycle enthusiasts with stops at points of interest as the group travels from location to location. This may be a way to reach out to would-be members as well.
- **Set up a classic car caravan.** Turn to your local classic car club and get them to escort your members to several locations of interest along the way.

When planning activities and entertainment, remember that oftentimes the journey can be as much fun as the destination when it comes to group trips. Be flexible and allow for participants to enjoy themselves at the destination and along the way.

## Avoid Burnout By Breaking With Routine

Job getting to you? Feeling overwhelmed? To gain perspective and break with routine:

1. Spend one day out of each month visiting other member organizations. Discover what they're doing to recruit, retain and manage members.
2. Designate at least one day during each quarter as “chew the fat” day. Take other staff and/or key members to a pleasant environment to look at the big picture and talk about what's working and what's not working.
3. Take time each week to walk your facility or campus, see programs and services in action and recall how your organization serves members in meaningful ways.

## Should You Classify Partners as Members?

By Erin Sandage

Corporate partners bring a lot to the table for organizations and associations. They provide much-needed revenue and valuable educational content, which benefits members by giving them solutions to financial, programmatic and regulatory challenges. Corporate partners are big supporters of an organization's mission, but usually aren't classified as "members."

"This is a cause of angst for many corporate partners," explains Bruce Rosenthal, corporate partnership and sponsorship consultant. "They have been recruited for their financial support as well as their intellectual contributions to the association and its members. Yet when there is a gathering of members, a survey of members or a special benefit for members, the corporate partners are *persona non grata*."

However, Rosenthal says there is currently a trend to change that way of thinking. Rosenthal, along with Dan Kowitz, founder and CEO of JSB Partnership Consultants (Chicago, IL), have found that some forward-thinking organizations are classifying their corporate partners as members.

"As more associations seek to expand their services to better fulfill their missions and expand their knowledge inventory to better serve their industry, these organizations will want to include corporate partners and other stakeholders as members," Rosenthal explains.

But there could be some barriers to a change of member classification. According to Kowitz, some organizations' and associations' bylaws have very specific criteria defining what type of company can be a member. In some cases, the types of companies that are corporate partners would not qualify to be a member without a bylaws change.

"However, this thinking needs to be regularly challenged," says Kowitz. "I have completed very recent work with several Minority Supplier Development Council affiliates. Their members — minority-owned businesses — and their partners are both integrally involved and invested in fueling supply chains with business from and with Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs). In this particular situation, both sides are essentially members and partners together in advancing their respective industries. Both partners and members receive sponsorship-related benefits and membership-related benefits."

Providing corporate partners with a member status can help cement the relationship and a true partnership and show potential partners that they are a valued member of the team.

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## Member Care Best Practices

It's no secret that excellent customer service leads to loyalty. When members see an association go above and beyond to address their needs, they have no desire to seek solutions elsewhere. However, the moment member care comes secondary to the organization's priorities, these relationships become at risk. Robust benefit packages, innovative tools and elaborate conference offerings are only valuable when they truly serve the member.

Low retention rates, negative feedback and confusion surrounding new products may be indicative of poor customer service. "When organizations are in a growth spurt or in the process of developing new products, the customer experience can become an exposed wound," says Nicole Araujo, director of business development for BrightKey, Inc. (Annapolis, MD), a customer service solutions company serving nonprofit and for-profit businesses nationwide. "New initiatives require additional resources and staff time, which leads to increased customer service needs. Member care should never be the casualty."

Associations can create favorable experiences for members by following these best practices:

1. **Understand launch processes and timelines.** Associations can avoid potential gaps in member care by anticipating outcomes and preparing contingency plans. "One client planned to manage a new initiative through e-mail transactions, but when most of their customers replied by phone, it created an immediate influx of volume into their call center," Araujo says. "We were able to apply back-up staff to accommodate the unexpected calls, but handling this in-house could have had dramatic negative effects on the customer experience."
2. **Lean on external partners.** "Many associations make the mistake of handling all facets of customer service on their own, without enlisting the help of qualified, external partners," Araujo says. "Associations that realize teams like those at BrightKey are here to assist them, they become more creative and far more efficient."
3. **Map the member experience.** "Thoroughly map experiences by identifying how members are joining, how they are engaging and how they perceive the services you provide, then evaluate ways to streamline your processes," Araujo says. "Member surveys can reveal pain points and provide guidance on how to move forward."
4. **Anticipate growing pains.** "Be proactive instead of reactive," Araujo says. "Understand your operations today and how the introduction of new products and services can cause shifts. It's impossible to maintain excellent customer service when you're in the throes of solving a problem."
5. **Apply the "Five-Minute Rule."** "Put yourself in the member's shoes and ask, 'If I had five minutes to complete a task, would my association make this possible?'" Araujo says. "If not, dissect your methods for handling common customer issues and streamline the experience by eliminating excessive touch points or phone trees."

*Source: Nicole Araujo, Director, Business Development, BrightKey, Inc., Annapolis, MD. Phone (301) 604-3305, ext. 1125. E-mail: naraujo@brightkey.net. Website: www.brightkey.net*

## Could a Rebranding Campaign Help Membership Growth?

By Megan Venzin

Emergency nurses are required to work in a fast-paced, high-pressure environment where critical decisions are made in a matter of moments. Extended periods of downtime are rare for individuals in this profession. It was this very fact which helped fuel a 2016 Gold Circle Award-winning rebranding campaign for the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA; Des Plaines, IL).

“The goal of the membership materials rebranding campaign was to create a look and feel that was reflective of our mission and the benefits of joining our association,” says Director of Member Relations Bridget Krause. “The membership materials needed to communicate ENA’s brand and value in a matter of seconds.”

Low rates of awareness of membership recruitment messaging and lack of awareness of member benefits had caused ENA membership numbers to plateau at 40,000, and remain as such for several years. This stagnation influenced a movement to improve the design of membership materials, as well as new methods for engagement and recruitment. Following just one year of implementation, ENA recorded their highest membership number to date: 42,395 members. This figure reflected a four percent overall growth in new members.

The strategic rebrand was powered by three key objectives:

- Prospective members could immediately recognize ENA was an organization for them.
- Emergency nurses could “see themselves in the organization,” whether they were brand-new or seasoned, had served in the military or worked as an EMT.
- Imagery was created that was reflective of the level of excellence that ENA strives for through practice-related photos that are dynamic, relevant and vibrant.

“The design elements helped simplify and reorganize membership join processes, which not only helped make completion of the form clearer to the user, but created efficiencies with the member services team in processing applications,” Krause says. “Members started posting the new materials in their emergency departments and shared that they saw an almost immediate impact on the number of inquiries they received from colleagues.” The streamlined content and attractive materials helped introduce more prospective members to the benefits and services offered by ENA.

Krause offers the following steps for launching a successful rebranding campaign for your nonprofit:

- Create a purpose statement (reason) for the rebrand.
- Evaluate data, including membership numbers and member feedback.
- Conduct a member experience focus group/online evaluation to discover how members interact with current materials and new materials.
- Define the goals of a rebrand.
- Ensure the mission of the organization is reflective of the brand.
- Preview the new look and feel with key stakeholders (board members, leadership, etc.)
- Update all membership materials with the new brand to ensure a consistent experience.
- Evaluate if the rebranding effort met the defined goals.

Source: Bridget Krause, Director, Member Relations, Emergency Nurses Association, Des Plaines, IL. Phone (847) 460-4000. E-mail: [membership@ena.org](mailto:membership@ena.org). Website: [www.ena.org/membership](http://www.ena.org/membership)

## Consider Showcasing Obscure Members Statistics

In addition to obtaining the usual contact and business information in your membership applications, include unusual questions that will provide some interesting facts about your members.

Some examples of questions include:

- Have you ever gone sky diving?
- Have you ever swum with dolphins?
- Have you ever ridden in a hot air balloon?
- Have you ever gone zip lining?

Use members’ answers in a variety of ways to create a sense of intrigue about your membership. For example, on the membership page of your website consider creating a section to showcase the answers to these questions by placing a banner that says: “Did you know that X (number) of our members have been skydiving?”

Current members will enjoy trying to figure out who, besides themselves, might have answered yes to some of these questions. In addition, these intriguing statistics will catch the attention of prospective members who may have similar interests.

Besides listing answers anonymously, consider listing some of the more interesting answers you receive alongside the names of your members in your directory — with their permission, of course.

## Bring Training to Your Members

Rather than holding a conference or seminar in which members come to you, why not bring educational experiences and opportunities to them as an added benefit?

Explore the possibility of offering onsite training or educational programs geared to the particular group you plan to visit. Even if you have a standardized program, you can personalize each presentation to the particular group.

## Build Your E-Mail Database

- Here’s an idea to add new e-mail addresses to your database: In a direct-mail piece, ask members to answer certain questions, giving them the option to reply by e-mail.

## Offer Members the Chance to Be Mentored by Other Members

If you're looking to boost your membership base, consider beginning a mentoring program for new members.

A well-executed mentoring program can ensure the success of new members and bring them to a new and more committed level of membership. In addition, the program can draw attention to your membership organization, which can lead to new members.

Follow these seven steps to mentoring program success:

1. **Develop mentoring materials to ensure success of the new program.** If your organization does not already have a handbook, create one that is specialized to ensure the success of the mentoring program. Detail program requirements and goals and provide contact information for new members.
2. **Offer mentor trainings.** Develop a training schedule incorporating mentor training and continuing education for ongoing success.
3. **Develop a schedule for implementation of the new mentoring program.** Determine your organization's goals for the new mentoring program and develop a checklist with outlined steps of accomplishment for the mentor and the new members to accomplish over a set course of time. Design milestones that the new member and the mentor can accomplish together.
4. **Assign partners.** Pair experienced members with new members to introduce the new members to the traditions and expectations of the membership organization. Consider assigning two or three new members to experienced members who are willing to take on the challenge of mentoring more than one new member.
5. **Implement steps to take in the event a mentor/new member pairing is not suitable.**
6. **Design recognition and awards** for mentoring accomplishments and for new members' completion of their checklists to reinforce the program.
7. **Evaluate the new program within six months of implementation.** Design feedback forms that will be completed by mentors and new members to determine the effectiveness of your new program.

## Apply Design Thinking to Membership Challenges

Are you spending too much time convincing members why they need your products? You'd almost certainly have more luck if you spent those hours really getting to know your audience. When you build membership and educational services that reflect the members' personal needs and desires, you remove a necessity for excess persuasion from the equation. Membership and engagement campaigns should be focused on people, not sales.

Design thinking is a different, systematic approach to problem solving and value creation that starts with a deep understanding of members' motivations, thoughts and human behavior. Instead of focusing on customer research as an afterthought, organizations must first strive to approach members with empathy to determine what truly matters to them. This approach fosters lasting value and sustainable relationships.

"You miss opportunities when you look at customer needs only as they relate to existing products," says Anna Caraveli, managing partner of The Demand Networks, LLC (Alexandria, VA). "Just look at Amazon. This is a company that started as a bookstore. By developing the understanding that their audience valued convenience, they managed to build a shopping experience that solved the daily frustrations of their customers. From there, Amazon began to morph into something much stronger."

Design thinking empowers associations to make strategic decisions that directly serve their audiences. Caraveli relays the five elements of design thinking:

1. **Empathize.** Put yourself in your members' shoes. "This goes beyond just 'listening' to uncover emotional nuances, motivations, daily details and unarticulated needs," Caraveli says. "You must put your members' problems first — above your own ideas for products or solutions."
2. **Define.** Use interviews and member feedback to develop fresh insights into their needs and struggles, and then prioritize them. Identify and reframe the right problem to solve from their perspective. "Understand the whole person, not just the issues," Caraveli says. "Primarily learn by immersing yourself in their environments, thoughts and activities rather than through the lens of your association."
3. **Ideate.** Incorporate these individuals as you generate new ideas for membership benefits, products and services. "Engage in a joint review of research results," Caraveli says. "Developing joint insights and criteria will guide you to create solutions that are mutually beneficial."
4. **Prototype.** "You don't have to feel overwhelmed by thinking that you have to make a product, service or idea perfect before you launch it. In design thinking, you follow a more entrepreneurial mode by putting a small-scale, imperfect version of your product or idea in the market, and perfect it through the continuous feedback of members," Caraveli says. "Instead of conventional strategic planning, try extracting insights from interviews of members and using the design thinking brainstorming process to build simple prototypes."
5. **Test.** Test your prototypes to ensure they resonate with members. "A product is nothing more than a solution to a need, so a granular understanding of the customer experience is critical to meeting these needs," Caraveli says. "The results of the test will allow you to scale and inform packaging and design solutions, stronger brand identity and the best communication channels for reaching your audience."

### Ideal Mentor Leaders

- Are well-regarded within the organization.
- Exhibit a positive outlook on the membership organization.
- Possess strong leadership skills.
- Are able and willing to devote two to three hours per week mentoring.
- Have a willingness to work one on one with new members.

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