

5 STEPS TO IMPROVE YOUR MARKETING CAMPAIGNS



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Viral marketing, search engine optimization, blog marketing and buzz marketing. All four marketing tactics are portrayed as effective ways to market your organization's meetings, membership or publications. If you are responsible for your association's marketing efforts, you've probably tried some of these or other nontraditional tactics. Yet the needle has hardly moved and you have little to show for your efforts. Maybe you've seen some positive results but just not earth-shattering. Before you give up, consider these five steps to help improve the results of your next marketing campaign.

1. Target your marketing efforts toward your High Value Audience.

Associations often market every product they offer to every segment of their membership with a "one size fits all" approach. With this strategy, even the most eye-catching campaign will yield low results. Plus, it can be very costly for the organization.

To gain a greater return on your marketing dollars, first identify the types of members and customers who would find *high value* from your offering. Then create a marketing campaign with this specific target in mind.

To determine who belongs in your *high value* audience, begin with a simple schematic outlining your association's programs, products and services. In this example, I have used general terms. When you create your audit, be specific. Identify each asset by name.

MEMBER SEGMENTS

<u>Asset</u>	<u>Academics</u>	<u>Government</u>	<u>Industry</u>	<u>Supplier</u>
Journal	3	1	2	0
Magazine	1	1	3	3
Trade Show	1	2	3	3
Virtual Expo	2	0	3	2
Online Job Board	1	1	3	0
Insurance Program	0	0	3	0
Research	3	2	1	0

Scale: 3 = High Value 2 = Some Value 1 = Low Value 0 = No Value

2. Align your marketing efforts with your brand image.

An association's brand is more than just a tagline, logo or color palette. It is both the promise you make to your audience and the delivery on that promise.

The five elements of a brand include:

- *Emotional Connection.* Does your association connect with people on an emotional level?
- *Value.* Does your association deliver a good value for the price?
- *Accessibility.* Do members and customers perceive your association to be convenient?
- *Awareness.* Is your target market aware of your brand? Do your members consider your association their primary association?
- *Relevant Differentiation.* This is the biggest indicator of future market share and profitability. Is your association unique and different in member-relevant, member-compelling ways?

When you are ready to design your collateral, think about the emotional reaction your members will experience when they open the envelope, e-mail or magazine. Is it aligned with your brand?

3. Experience trumps message.

What you say pales in comparison to what you do. Your marketing messages will quickly fall flat if you fail to deliver what you've promised. If you want to ensure your members are satisfied, evaluate the entire experience from start to finish. Your evaluation should include the following:

- *Educate* your entire staff about the general attributes of the product, such as pricing, timing, content, etc., so they may answer any questions without transferring the member to a different department.
- *Review* your Web site to make sure all general attributes are clearly identified.

- *Create* a service guarantee. Make sure it is straightforward, liberal and flexible.
- *Quickly address and resolve* all complaints.

4. Market the benefits and advantages, not just the features.

Take a look at your last educational brochure. Does it highlight the benefits and advantages of attending the session or just the features such as the date, time, place and event descriptions? In the book *Smart Marketing for Associations*, M. Michelle Poskaitis defines features as “factual characteristics of a product or service expressed in terms of form or function.” She defines benefits as a “favorable or desired experience the customer derives when using the product or service. Generally, customers purchase to avoid pain or gain pleasure.”

For example, the Healthcare Information & Management Systems Society (HIMSS) considered hosting a virtual conference and expo that would consist of all the typical features of a multi-day conference with the exception of face-to-face contact. Because this was a new event (and an unfamiliar concept), HIMSS wanted to emphasize the unique value of the event throughout its marketing efforts. Our research showed that individuals who wished to avoid the expense, hassle or time associated with traveling to a face-to-face conference would be interested in a virtual conference. Further research indicated that great content drives registration. Upon completion of the research we developed the following value proposition for attendees and exhibitors:

Attendees: The HIMSS Virtual Conference provides unique value because of its “must-see” content, affordable price, interactive environment and ability to connect peer to peer. The Virtual Expo offers an easy and convenient way to search for vendors and find out more about a company’s products and services without leaving your office.

Exhibitors: The HIMSS Virtual Conference & Expo offers a unique, innovative way to obtain high-quality leads, reach target audiences, and increase brand awareness without the hassle of booth expenses, staffing, travel logistics and time away from the office.


By identifying the advantages and benefits of the conference features, we were

able to help the association create a marketing message to promote the conference.

5. Leverage the relationship between the list owner and the recipient.

Have you ever purchased a list of highly qualified prospects that yielded low or negligible results? The low response may not have been a result of ho-hum creative materials or an unattractive offer. The real strength of any list, even a highly targeted one, comes from the relationship

between the sender and the recipient. The reason is pretty simple: Customers seek solutions from organizations they consider to be their primary association.

One solution is to co-brand or co-market an event with the list owner. Another alternative is to encourage the list owner, which in many cases is an allied association or supplier partner, to create and distribute their own marketing materials. 

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