



WHITEPAPER

Top 10 greatest hits for membership marketing

All-time best ways for small associations to take membership marketing to the next level



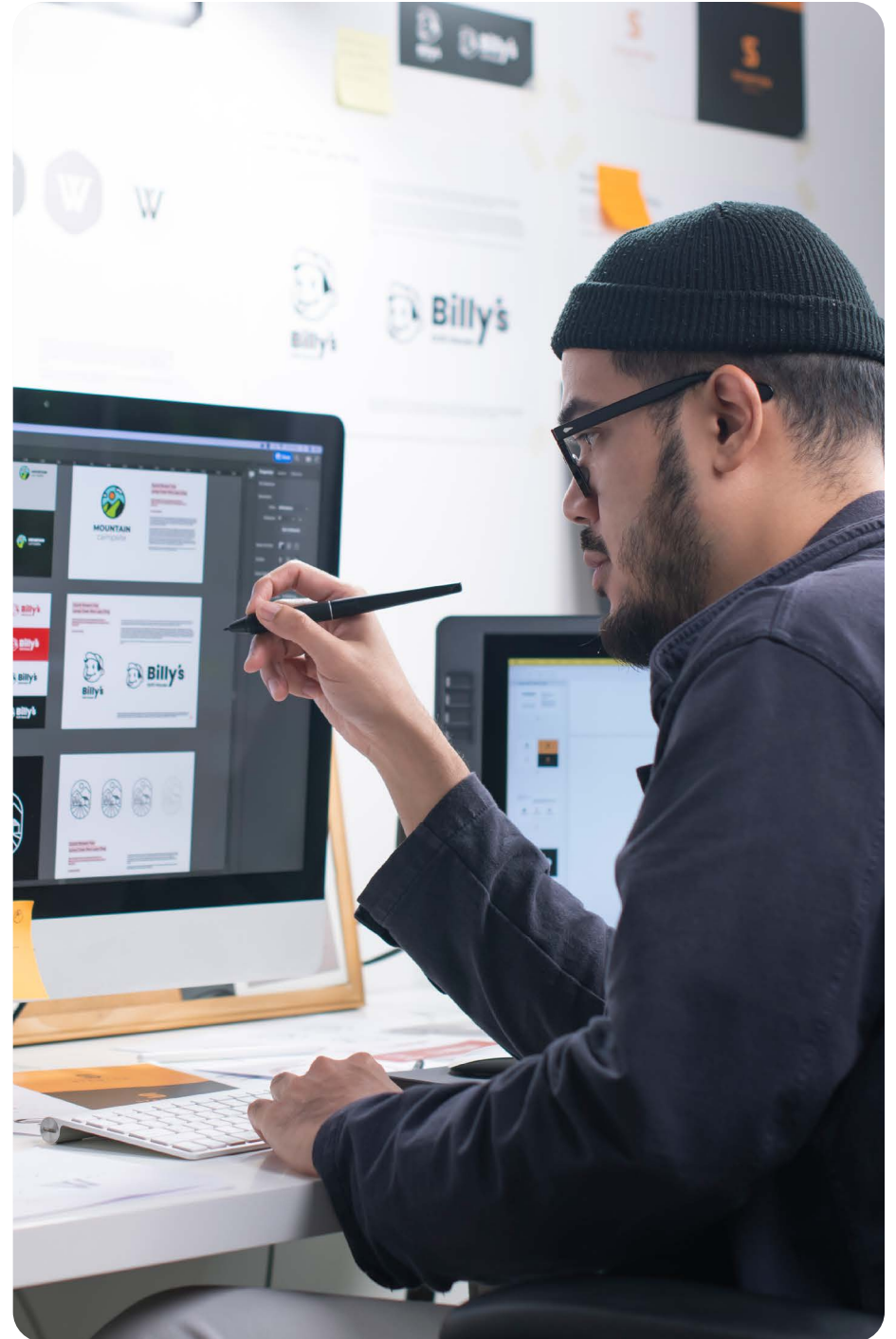
Introduction

Your association might have a small staff, but you still need to continually recruit and retain members to keep your organization going strong.

Here at YourMembership by Momentive Software, we get it. We've provided small to midsize associations with affordable, easy-to-use, all-in-one association membership software (AMS) for 25 years. Through the years, we've also provided tips and best practices for membership marketing based on our research and experience in the industry.

And now we're presenting our top 10 membership marketing hits to help your small staff get big results. These aren't just one-hit wonders. These are our all-time greatest ways to take your marketing to the next level – even when you have limited time and resources.

So, get ready to get your membership marketing groove on...



1. Getting personal

Association industry research by Momentive Software, formerly Community Brands has shown that members want to receive personalized and relevant content from their associations. Use your AMS to collect data about your members and then use that information to provide members with the personalized communications and content they seek.

Here are some ideas:

Set up a preference center

A preference center is an online portal that gives your members an easy way to control what communications they receive from your organization and how often they receive them. It also gives you another way to gather more of the data you need to improve member communications.

Get to know your members better

Gather as much data as you can about your members. For example, record information about their interests, behaviors, career stages, and other details in your AMS. Be sure to let your members know that you're gathering information to give them a member experience that better meets their needs.

TIP:

YourMembership AMS offers multiple ways to personalize the member experience through a preference center, email segmentation, targeted online community content, and more.



Segment and target

Divide your audience into smaller groups based on the information you have about them, and then send them communications and information that are most relevant to each group. For example, based on your members' interests and preferences, recommend new industry reports or new services offered by your organization that will help them in their specific career stage.

TIP:

Using YourMembership AMS, you can easily keep track of non-members and members so that you can target communications to them appropriately. YourMembership also includes functionality that allows non-members to sign up to receive organizational emails without needing to join, while automatically adding the non-member record to YourMembership.

Track and measure your personalization efforts

At a minimum, be sure to track and measure open and click-through rates for your communications to ensure you're connecting with your members. Take it further by using reports and dashboard functionality in your AMS so you can see the impact your personalization efforts are having on your membership marketing.

2. Making it easy to join and renew

The ultimate goal of membership marketing is to get members to join or renew. But for all of your efforts to attract and retain members, you can lose them in a single moment if you don't make joining and renewing as simple as possible.

Here are some things you can do to make it easier for members to join and renew:

Be mobile-friendly

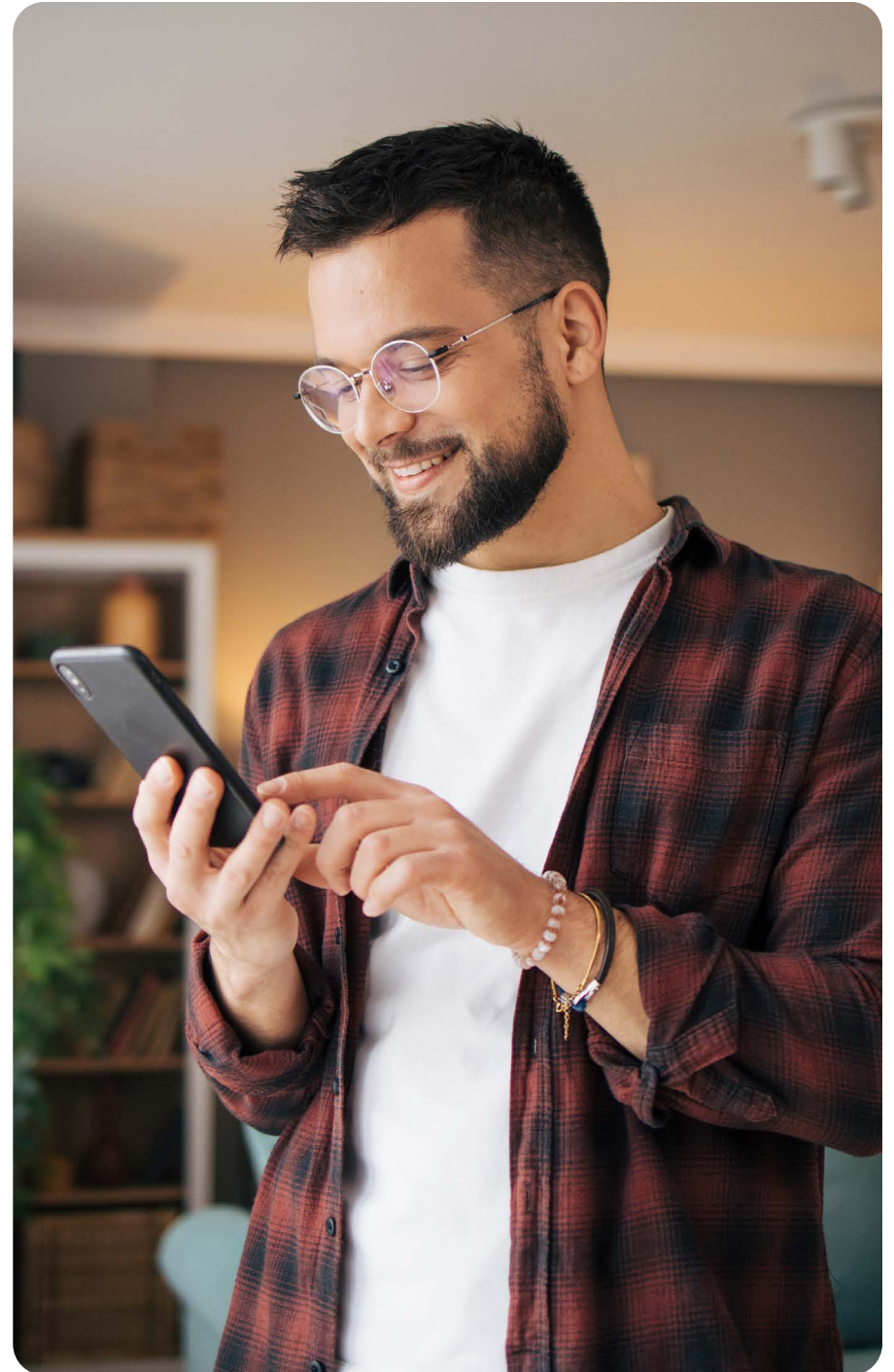
Your members expect to easily access and interact with your website, online forms, and other content with their mobile devices. Be sure your website is ready with a mobilefriendly design that's optimized for viewing on a broad range of mobile devices. And remember: Mobile responsive design is not just for your association's web pages. People also expect to easily view your emails on their mobile devices.

Make joining online a breeze

When a potential new member lands on your website, make sure there's a clear and compelling path for them to become a member. It should be easy for prospective members to understand the value you provide and then figure out how to join. And if you haven't already done so, move your paper-based membership application online. The form should be as streamlined as possible: Ask for only what's necessary to process each membership. You can ask for more data later.

TIP:

YourMembership AMS includes a content management system with mobile-friendly layouts and an easy-to-use editing tool to help you quickly build emails, forms, and web pages that work and look great on mobile devices.



Reduce the cost barrier

Price can be a barrier to joining or renewing – especially for those early in their careers or those who are between jobs. Consider offering budget-friendly monthly or quarterly dues payment options.

TIP:

Using YourMembership AMS, you can easily set up installment dues payment options for new and renewing members.

Offer auto-renewal

Life gets busy, and sometimes your members simply forget to renew. One of the best ways to address this issue is to offer an option to automatically renew membership, with the membership fee charged to the member's credit card.

TIP:

YourMembership AMS allows you to set up an auto-renewal option, with corresponding automated emails that notify members when their membership has been renewed.



3. Providing a great onboarding experience

You might not think of member onboarding as membership marketing. But consider that the member onboarding experience you provide can greatly impact the effectiveness of your member renewal efforts. That's because the first interactions set the stage for each member's entire relationship with your organization. So, you need to not only welcome new members, but also start providing them immediate value.

Some ideas:

Send a "welcome" email

Put yourself in a new member's shoes: What information about your association would be helpful to know? Keep it simple, and just include the important stuff.

Celebrate new members in your email newsletter

Celebrate your new members for joining. It's a great way to welcome them into your community.

Create an onboarding email series that explains your association and its benefits

Instead of including every possible bit of information in your welcome email, create multiple emails that your new members will incrementally receive after they join. These emails can include information about your association, explanations of benefits, helpful tips, or recent blogs articles – really anything that adds value for your new members.



Help new members feel at home with tools or how-to videos.

Again, put yourself in your new member's shoes. What tools do they need to become familiar with? What pages on your website will be helpful to them? Make sure new members know where these resources are, so they can get the most out of their membership.

Use personalization as much as possible

Here's that personalization idea again. Whether it's in emails or on your website, personalization is a great way to help your new members to feel connected to your organization and know that they're receiving relevant and valuable communications.

TIP:

YourMembership AMS email campaign management functionality enables you to quickly and easily create email lists based on a variety of member information, including membership level, so you can send them relevant communications.

4. Offering an online community

Offering an online community can be an easy (but powerful) way for your small staff to provide an appealing member benefit that attracts and engages members in multiple ways.

First, an online community is a valuable member benefit in itself

It gives your members and prospective members a way to network with each other and share ideas. You can promote this benefit to recruit new members and keep them around year after year.

Second, an online community is a great way to communicate with and engage members – further increasing loyalty

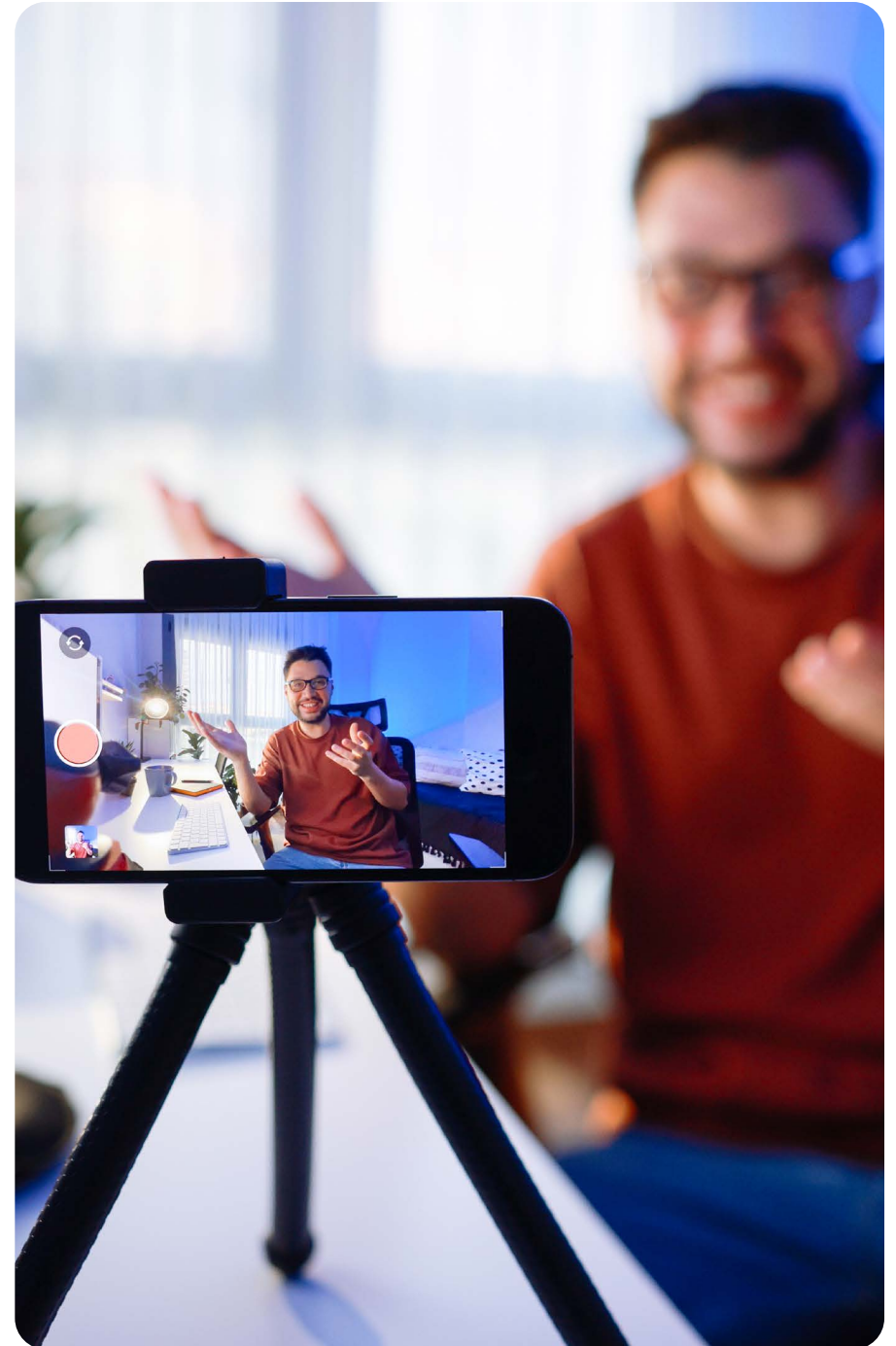
For example, you can use your online community to:

✓ Post important content

Post breaking industry news, reports on industry best practices, new insights from industry thought leaders, content written by your association staff, membership publications, and more in your online community. This approach turns your online community into the go-to place for industry information. It also provides a place to build dialog around your content, get feedback, and keep members coming back for more – an effective approach for member engagement and retention.

TIP:

YourMembership AMS includes online community functionality that makes it easy to build a thriving online member community.



✓ Highlight timely information

You can use your online community to elevate timely information and make sure your members don't miss critically important details. For example, you can highlight breaking industry news, updates on new regulations, and new certification requirements that have an immediate impact on your members.

TIP:

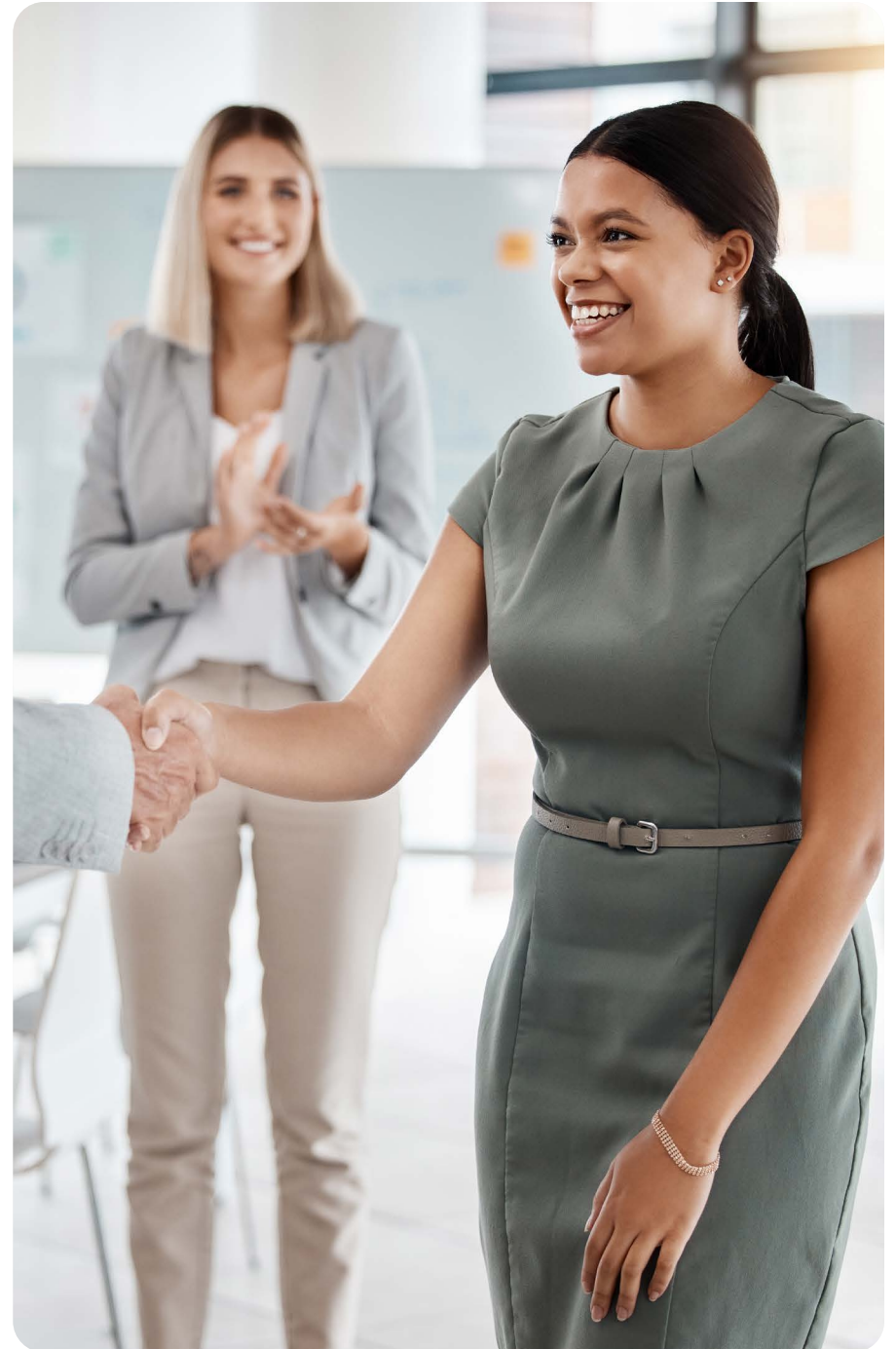
Use the "Quick Announcement" area in YourMembership's online community functionality to improve visibility of the latest news or resources, ensuring your members are in-the-know about industry updates.

✓ Encourage connections

Get members more engaged and connected with each other by setting up discussion groups and suggesting member connections based on similar needs and interests. You can even use your online community to engage members before, during, and after your association's events by doing things like encouraging discussions about event content.

TIP:

With YourMembership online community functionality, you can automatically make suggested connections based on members' similar interests.



5. Adding an online career center

Association industry research by Momentive Software, formerly Community Brands shows that job and career development opportunities are consistently among the top benefits that members seek. A robust career center offers a huge member benefit that you can use to attract and retain members (and it can help you generate revenue, too!). It gives you a way to connect members with job opportunities and provide members with the industry-specific career development resources they want while selling job postings and ads to companies in your industry.

And here's another reason this approach makes the list of top 10 membership marketing greatest hits: When you connect your online career center with your AMS, it can help you even more with your membership marketing.

For example:

Market to prospective members

When non-members create an account in your career center, they can be automatically added to your AMS, creating a profile for them. Your career center can collect engagement data based on various touch points, and then pass the information back to the profiles in your AMS. You can then use this information to drive membership by triggering automated marketing campaigns that share the benefits of becoming a member and invite people to join.

Engage and retain members

Data gathered from your career center in your AMS can give you detailed information that can be helpful for creating targeted marketing campaigns. For instance, not all members using your career center will be actively searching for a job, but they might be looking to advance in their career when given the opportunity. For those members, you could promote your association's courses and certifications to help them further their careers.

TIP:

YM Careers by Momentive Software integrates with YourMembership AMS and offers job board software and services to help you set up and manage an online career center that drives member engagement and increases non-dues revenue – without the need for added staff time or resources.



6. Asking members to help

You don't have to do all of your membership marketing alone. Your members can be a big help.

Here are some ways to invite your most engaged and loyal members to help you extend your marketing reach:

Encourage word of mouth

Tapping into your current members' networks is one of the best ways to find prospective new members. Send an email offering current members an incentive to get them out there promoting your organization. For example, turn member recruitment into a game by offering current members free registration to your next event when they recruit five new members.

Gather testimonials

Peer recommendations for becoming a member of your association or participating in a specific activity are far more compelling than you simply asking someone to join. Invite your most engaged members to create short videos or written testimonials about their member experience that you can use in member recruitment and renewal campaigns.

Build an ambassador program

Ask members to volunteer to help you recruit new members and improve member retention. They can do things like welcome new members, be paired up as a "buddy" with a new member to help orient them to the organization, help to develop content that you can use in marketing campaigns, and start and keep conversations going in your online community to improve member engagement.



TIP:

You can use survey functionality built into YourMembership AMS to collect member testimonials. Simply send a survey to your most involved members asking them to share their experience with your association for your use in membership marketing.

7. Rethinking your membership models

Growing and retaining membership requires packages (benefits and pricing) that help you attract new members and keep members renewing. But member packaging and pricing can be tricky. If you overprice them, you run the risk of turning off members. Underprice them, and they might seem less valuable than they are.

Here are some ideas to help you strike the right balance:

Get member feedback

Before you create new membership models or make changes to existing membership packages, gather feedback from your members. Some helpful questions to ask: [Do the new or existing packages provide enough value?](#) [Which benefits do you find most/least useful?](#) [What could our association add to the member experience that would make it more valuable to you?](#)

Think about your pricing goals

Determine what you're trying to achieve with each package or level to help you decide on the ideal price. For example:

Driving revenue (profitability)	Reaching more people (affordability)
Get the highest price possible so that you can use the profits for new/improved programs; the secret here is to offer enough value to justify the price while capturing as much margin as possible.	When this is your goal, the price must be as affordable as possible so that more people sign up. The trick is to not price it so low that it's perceived as a low-quality offering.

Consider new membership models

Consider these examples of membership models that you might use to provide greater member value while reaching your pricing goals:

All-access pass

Give members access to all content, webinars, on-demand courses, and resources at a premium price.

Freemium

Allow members to test drive the value of membership through a "free" tier that offers limited access to certain benefits, with an option to later invest in a premium membership for access to more benefits and value.

Free trial

Offer a free month of membership, allowing members to try before they buy.

A la carte

Offer a membership that allows members to choose only the services they want.

TIP:

YourMembership AMS allows you to easily set up a variety of membership models and accept multiple payment options, including convenient recurring and installment payments.

8. Getting the word out

No matter how great your member benefits might be, if people don't know about them, you won't be successful at attracting and retaining members.

Here are some key channels to help you to promote your association's value:

Website

This is one of the first things a potential member sees in relation to your association, often making it the first impression. It's also a go-to resource for your current members. Make sure your website is mobile-friendly, presents a modern and attractive design, offers clear navigation, and is optimized for search engines.

Email

This communications channel can be highly effective for connecting with prospective members and keeping current members engaged. Be sure to make emails easy to read on mobile devices, present an engaging design with easy-to-click links, and segment your audience to send more targeted emails with personalized content.

TIP:

YourMembership's Drag and Drop web editor makes it easy to create, edit, and design pages with few technical skills needed. You simply select a template, and then drag and drop design elements – including text, images, videos, tables, and links – where you want them on each page. YourMembership also offers optional website design services for more advanced sites that will help you create a modern and intuitive website design.

Texting

Adding text messaging to your communications channels is an easy and powerful way to send members updates, invitations, offers, reminders, and other time-sensitive information. With the right tools and some best practices, text messaging can help your association break through the noise of today's hyper-connected world to notify your members of important information and offers.

TIP:

YourMembership AMS includes a tool to allow you to use text messaging right from your AMS. Learn more in the infographic, [Amp Up Member Engagement with SMS Text Messages](#).



Social media

Promote your association's content and member benefits through your social media channels. You can even use paid advertising on social media to get your association in front of potential members who might not know about you yet. And ask your current members to help you promote your organization through their own social networks. Finally, don't forget to interact by liking, commenting, and replying to comments on relevant posts to stay engaged with prospects and members.

Advertising

Look for opportunities to promote your association and member benefits in industry publications. Also, create banner ads for your content and benefits on your own website to encourage site visitors to give you their contact information.



9. Automating

Certain manual processes related to membership marketing can be time-consuming. By automating these processes, you can free up valuable staff time that can be better spent on attracting new members and getting members more engaged.

Here are some examples of processes you can automate to simplify and streamline your membership marketing:

Email communications

Automate email communications based on members' actions, such as registering for an event or paying membership dues. For example, when a new member joins your organization and pays dues, automatically send an email confirmation for joining that includes a receipt of payment.

Member information updates

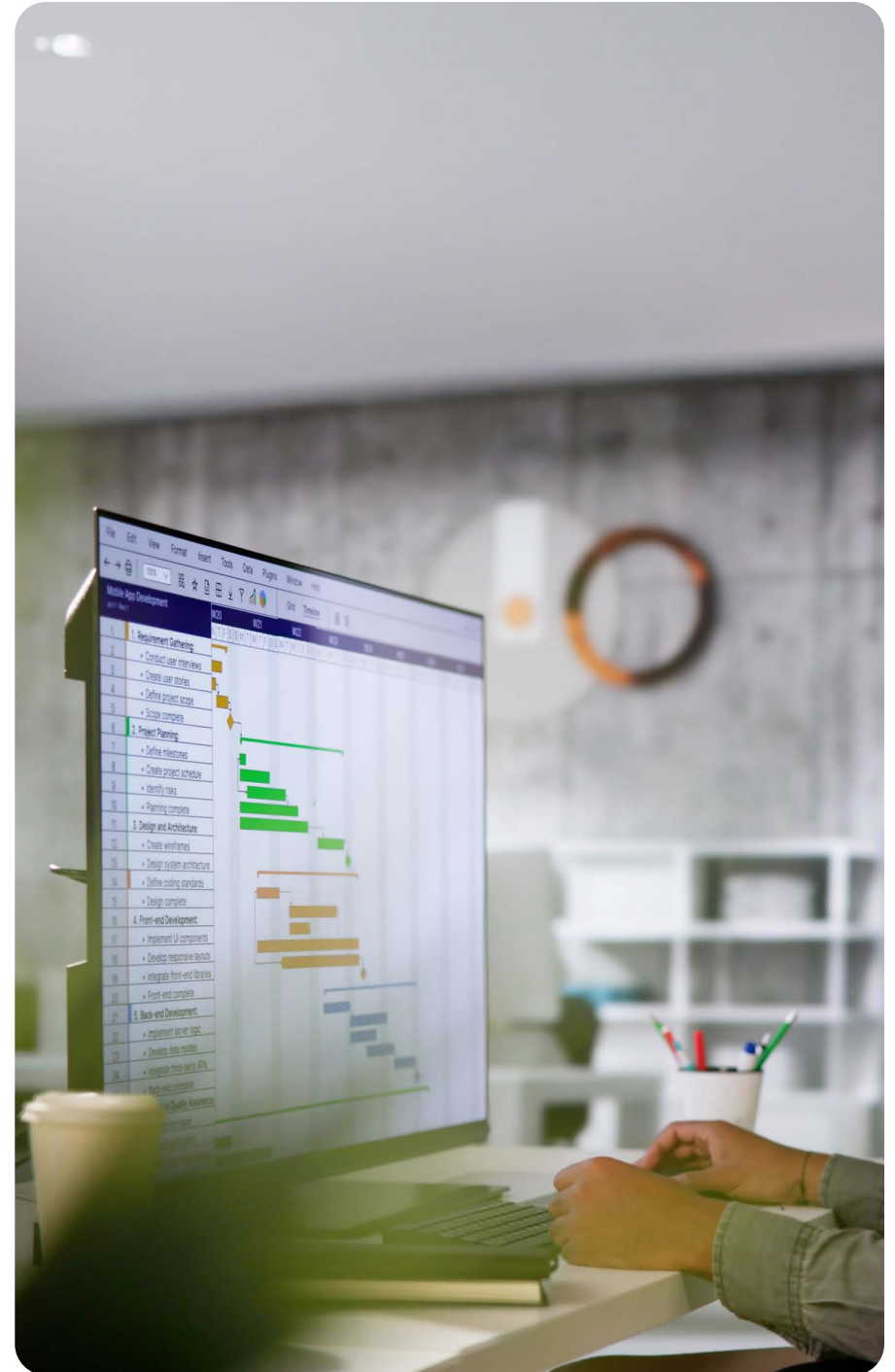
There's no need for your staff members to update every member detail. For example, when members register for your association's annual meeting, allow them to enter their latest contact information and check a box to update their profile information in your AMS with the new details.

Reports

Schedule important and timely membership marketing reports to send automatically via email to yourself, your team, and/or executive management. For example, set up a workflow in your AMS to automatically send a monthly marketing summary to your executive director and board of directors.

TIP:

YourMembership gives you pre-built workflows so that you can easily automate manual processes.



10. Putting your data to work

Using your association’s data to gain insights can help you track the success of your marketing activities, make more informed marketing decisions, and spot opportunities for improvement and growth.

Here are some ways to use your data to improve your membership marketing:

Get a single view of your data

Data that’s in multiple systems and spreadsheets can get outdated in a hurry. The next thing you know, you aren’t sure how to find the most recent information. The solution: Consolidate your data in a single AMS system to ensure you’re looking at the most accurate and current member data from across your organization.

Use dashboards and reports

To put your data to work, you must have a way to view and share data. Make sure your AMS includes configurable dashboards for a birds’ eye view of key performance metrics as well as advanced reporting that gives you deeper insights into data.

TIP:

YourMembership AMS gives you a single place to house, view, and use your association’s data. It gives you dashboard capabilities that make it easy to monitor key metrics for your marketing efforts; customizable reports that you can create and share; and data visualizations to help you gain added insights into your membership data.

Make your data come alive

Beyond basic dashboards and detailed reports, data visualizations can give you additional insights. Think of them as more informative dashboards for various functions across your organization that allow you to define how data is displayed. Here are three examples of how you can use data visualizations for specific insights into your membership marketing:

Data visualization	Insights provided	Actions you could take	Potential results
Members by years of membership	Retention by member type: For example, at what year does your membership stop renewing?	Create personalized outreach campaigns for at-risk members instead of sending generic renewal notifications.	Retention by member type: For example, at what year does your membership stop renewing?
Dues revenue	Trends in dues revenue and how members move among membership tiers.	Create targeted campaigns to help drive members to the best membership tier.	Trends in dues revenue and how members move among membership tiers.
Activities	Identify which times of the year you see the largest drop in membership.	Develop a marketing campaign that gives members incentives to join during your slow season.	Identify which times of the year you see the largest drop in membership.

Bonus hit: Listening

To effectively market your association, you must really understand members and prospective members. You need to know their needs and concerns so that you can provide and communicate value. And one of the best ways to understand them is to listen to them.

Here are some ideas:

Surveys

Send a periodic survey to gather members' thoughts and ideas about your organization's programs and benefits.

Consider sending different surveys to:

- ✓ New members, to get their impressions of the onboarding process and what's important to them
- ✓ Returning members, to find out what's most important to them, what's not, and how their member experience could be improved
- ✓ Lapsed members, to learn what made them leave and what (if anything) would entice them to return

TIP:

YourMembership AMS has survey functionality built in, making it easy to create and send targeted surveys and collect feedback.

Focus groups

Host focus groups with diverse audiences of members to find out more about their needs and how you can continue to deliver value.

Online community

Use your online community to better understand what members want. Pay attention to what members are talking about in the online community, and use those learnings to inform your membership marketing campaigns. Also, set up online surveys and polls, and promote them in posts to your online community to gather additional member feedback.

TIP:

YourMembership AMS makes it easy to build and post targeted surveys and polls in your online community, allowing you to get feedback and better understand your members' interests and needs.



Take the next step

Your ability to recruit and retain members effectively is vitally important to the ongoing success of your association. It's also important to have the right association management software (AMS) system in place to support your marketing efforts. Using YourMembership AMS, you can implement the techniques in this guide, and more. YourMembership AMS offers affordable, easy-to-use, all-in-one membership software for small to mid-sized organizations. It includes membership management functionality, an online community platform, and much more to help you attract, engage, and retain members.

Find out more about
YourMembership today.

[Learn more](#)



About Momentive Software, formerly Community Brands

Momentive Software (formerly Community Brands) amplifies the impact of over 30,000 purpose-driven organizations in over 30 countries. Mission-driven organizations and associations rely on the company's cloud-based software and services to solve their most critical challenges: engage the people they serve, simplify operations, and grow revenue. Built with reliability at the core and strategically focused on events, careers, fundraising, financials, and operations, our solutions suite is bound by a common purpose to serve the organizations that make our communities a better place to live.

