

Communication Strategy Essential to Success of Membership Restructure

ASAE | Julia O'Connor | August 23, 2022



When the International Association of Movers reconfigured its membership structure to help combat inflation, a crucial part of members accepting it was the communications strategy. Using member advocates, webinars, and tailored outreach, IAM successfully helped members embrace the new membership paradigm.

Figuring how best to restructure our membership categories and pricing model was a huge undertaking for the International Association of Movers, but that was only half the battle. The other half was effectively communicating the new structure to members, so they embraced the changes rather than drop their membership. Here's a deeper look at that strategy, which included using member committees and staff to spread the word, creating an online questionnaire that made change easier, and segmenting marketing efforts for different audiences.

Get the Word Out

IAM used its volunteer membership restructuring committee to help explain the new structure to the general membership. The committee charted its progress via LinkedIn posts. These posts showed that members of the committee had a significant role in driving the project, as well as in creating and approving the final recommendation that was then presented to the IAM Executive Committee for approval.

Along with telling people about the change, IAM had to figure out how the association would get its more than 2,000 member companies in over 170 countries to select their membership category before the January 1 renewal date. IAM issued press releases and various member communications announcing the dues increase, and staff held several webinars and Zoom town halls. These events allowed IAM to present the membership restructuring with assistance from key restructuring committee members who walked the membership through the new categories and offerings, as well as the factors that led IAM to the new structure. The sessions were also recorded and made available to members who were not able to attend the live events.

Make Change Easier

To help members select their new membership category, staff created the IAM Member Category Questionnaire. The questionnaire, which takes less than five minutes to complete, walks members through 10 questions to help them determine which membership category is the best fit for their company. After they complete the survey, members receive their results with the recommended membership category. The membership department receives the results too, which opens a line of communication and allows for further assistance if necessary.

Embrace Marketing Segmentation

IAM took advantage of its revamped pricing model to launch a retention campaign, repackaging benefits under the new structure. Segmented marketing efforts were used in various ways, supported by member engagement scoring data. For example, low-engagement companies received communications tailored to move them up in engagement level, with opportunities that required a moderate increase in spending but that would result in projected ROI for their employees. The association took a similar approach with its mid-level engagement companies, identifying approximately 200 companies as prime targets for higher membership levels based on their engagement and spending. The third communication was directed at the highest tier of membership. This message thanked them for their commitment to the association and identified opportunities where they could continue to engage with IAM.

Most association membership departments inherently balk at mention of a dues increase and have even greater trepidation at the idea of a complete restructuring to the membership categories and pricing model. However, by assembling both historical and engagement data and harnessing input from a cross-section of its membership, an organization can successfully increase dues or restructure in a way that generates the additional revenue needed to sustain its operations.

Organizations are finding it necessary to reevaluate their membership models and pricing structures in response to changes in the business landscape. To succeed, they must take advantage of the hidden resource within their organizations: human capital. In the case of IAM, its collaborative environment allowed the staff to unite during a global pandemic to embark on a project that required little room for error.