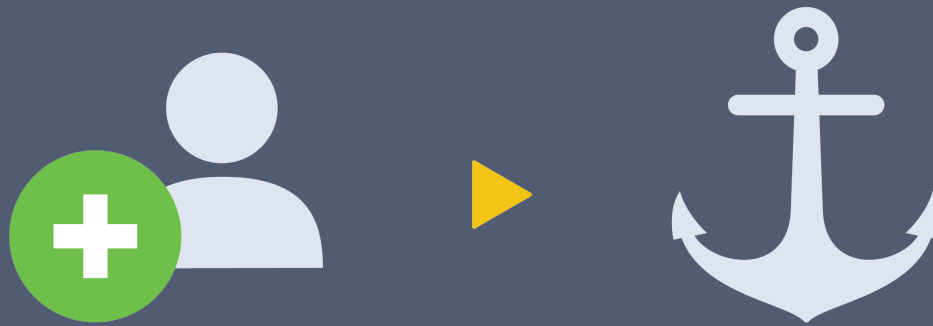




The Small-Staff Guide to **Association Marketing**



Marketing is important for a lot of reasons, but two of the biggest: **membership recruitment and retention.**

People can't join your organization if they don't know you exist. Similarly, people won't stay with your organization if they don't know what's going on — and find value in those activities. That said, it's crucial to come up with a marketing strategy and get the word out there — to your members and potential members.

Now we understand, you're an association professional, not necessarily a marketer, which is exactly why we're here to help. In this guide, we'll explain how to market your association through your organization's website, email, social media sites, and word-of-mouth marketing.

Website marketing

Your website is the first point of contact people have with your association, so it needs to be in tip-top shape.

First, focus on the basics. For example, navigation. When a prospect comes to your website, they should be able to get from A to B (and C and D) with ease. Walk through your website and make sure the navigation is simple and logical. (Note: You may want to ask one of your members or an outside party to help with this. You're familiar with your website so you may not catch some of the hang-ups first-time visitors might have.)

Once the navigation has been simplified, start focusing on updates. Walk through your site and make sure everything is up to date: your website copy, your event calendar, internal and external links, etc. In order for your site to be effective, it first has to be accurate.

After you've nailed down the basics, you'll want to consider taking your website marketing up a notch by focusing on SEO, or search engine optimization. SEO refers to the process of maximizing website visitors. (And more website visitors = more potential members.)

To help boost your website's SEO, consider the following tactics:

Make your site responsive

Google actually penalizes sites that aren't responsive, so if you want your website to show up in mobile searches (which most people conduct nowadays), it's crucial to utilize a responsive website design. Not only does this help with SEO, but it allows for a more pleasant user experience.

Incorporate keywords

Keywords are an SEO must. Without getting too technical here, SEO keywords are the words and phrases in your website content that make it possible for people to find your site via various search engines. Put simply, keywords help connect searchers to your site. If you need help identifying keywords for your organization, check out [Wordstream's Free Keyword Niche Finder](#).

Provide fresh, up-to-date content

SEO is all about making search engines and website visitors happy, and one of the best ways to do that is by providing fresh, valuable content. Blog posts, white papers, infographics, videos — all helpful when it comes to SEO. Just know that the more content you put out there, the more reason people have to revisit your organization's website.



Email marketing

Emails are a great way to market your association. That said, they're only effective if people actually read them. So the big question then becomes how do you get people to actually read your organization's emails?

Well for starters, make them valuable. Don't just send an email for the sake of sending an email. Make sure it has a purpose and provides the recipient with value. Another tip: personalize the content. If you have a prospect's name stored in your organization's database, include that in the opening line of your email. Now don't feel like you have to manually do this for every email you send. If you're using an **association management system**, or AMS for short, the AMS can actually pull that information for you (because it's linked to your organization's database). That means you can personalize hundreds upon hundreds of emails without having to do any extra work. (And no, this isn't a dream!)

One final tip regarding email marketing: If your emails are image-based, make SURE they're mobile-friendly. According to **Litmus Software**, 55 percent of emails are opened on a mobile device. That means if your email isn't mobile-optimized, it's likely to wind up in the trash. To make your emails mobile-friendly, try using a mobile-optimized design. And remember, always send yourself a test first!

Social media marketing

It's no secret that social media is a critical marketing tool. Sometimes, people go looking for a social media page before they go looking for an actual website. That says something, and it means you need to have at least somewhat of a social media presence.

Now you don't have to be on every social media site out there, but it does help to be on at least a few. Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are typically the most popular for companies and organizations, but only do what makes sense for YOUR association. What platforms are your members and potential members using? That's where you should be active.

Once you have social media sites up and running, be sure to post on a regular basis. We can't emphasize this point enough. The only thing worse than not having a social media site is having one that hasn't been updated in six months.

Not sure what to post on social media? Here are a few ideas:

- **Did you recently host an event or have volunteers help out with something?**
Post pictures. Pictures are social media gold.
- **Are there any big holidays coming up? The Fourth of July? Halloween?**
Wish your followers a happy and safe day/night. (Bonus: If your office is decorated for the holiday or your staff members are dressed up, snap a quick pic and post it!)
- **Do you have a blog? Did you just publish a new post?**
Share it on your various social media sites.
- **Even if you don't have a blog...did you read an interesting industry-related article?**
Share it with your followers.
- **Ask a question.**
Let's say your annual conference is coming up. Try asking, "What session or learning lab are you most looking forward to?" (Don't forget to respond to people's comments!)
- **Do you have any new board members?**
Take a picture of them and share it on social media. People want to see who's behind your organization.

Word-of-mouth marketing

This is perhaps the hardest type of marketing to employ (because it's out of your control), but it's also the most effective — so it's definitely worth some time and effort.

To get started with word-of-mouth marketing, first, identify your member advocates — people who are champions of your organization. (These are probably your most engaged members and those you likely see the most.) Once you've identified who those people are, reach out to them and see if they'd be willing to help market your association. This could include things like sharing your posts on social media, posting on their own ABOUT your organization, inviting friends to meetings and events, etc. In return, you could offer them perks — free swag, discounts on event registrations, a free subscription to one of your elite publications, etc.

You could even turn this into a formal referral program if you'd like. Consider putting together an email marketing campaign — highlighting the perks — to boost excitement and participation.

Just remember, the key to all of this is to make the relationship mutually beneficial. The better the perks, the more likely your members are to market your association. And the more marketing they do, the more members you're likely to get from those marketing efforts. (Mission accomplished!)



Sure, marketing may be a little time consuming, but it's crucial to grow (and sustain) your organization's membership. By tackling the big four — your website, email, social media, and word-of-mouth marketing — you're bound to drive awareness, recruitment, and even online member engagement.

Now let's say you have these marketing tactics down, but you're still looking to take your association's marketing up a notch. What's next? Well, have you tried inbound marketing? Inbound marketing is a powerful way to attract qualified traffic to your organization's website, and better yet, convert those visitors into members.

Want to learn more about how inbound marketing works?

Check out our free **Beginner's Guide to Inbound Marketing for Associations!**



Click here to check it out!

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MemberClicks offers all the tools that membership organizations need to make the most of the web. From online databases and event registrations to custom-designed websites and member communities, our products are tailor-made for small-staff organizations.

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