

June 2017 Association Tip-of-the-Month

Association Management Tips: What to Do When Potential Members Opt Out

Associations are complex organizations with many moving parts, and the prospect of managing them can be overwhelming. Member recruitment, member maintenance and outreach, event coordination, finances, liaising with the Board, and managing the day-to-day functioning is a lot to handle. Thankfully, you are not alone. If managed correctly, every participant in the association can be an asset who contributes to the success and efficient functioning of the whole. Here, are some top tips for successful association management.

Keep the Conversation Open

After a "no," follow up with a couple of simple questions. Remember, as long as they are willing to engage in back-and-forth communications, they are open to what you have to say. Ask questions like, "What is standing in the way of you joining our organization?" or, "What if you don't join and X happens?" As long as the conversation continues and the lines of communication are open, there's still the potential for the prospect to become a member.

Start New Lines of Communications

When you determine that they are really asking for some additional convincing, there are several lines of communication you can open, which will either lead to a "yes" or deliver you better insight into how to build a better value proposition with other prospects. Try these 3 tips:

- *Ask them for their feedback on your membership offerings. Maybe you haven't sufficiently explained a compelling reason to join, or maybe the pricing structure is not suitable. You can tweak your membership pitch or your offerings to reflect the feedback you get from these kinds of questions;*
- *Be willing to offer them a better deal on membership. We all want to feel that we've gotten a special deal—extra membership perks or special rates could just sweeten deal; and*
- *Build their trust. Perhaps they will be willing to make a smaller commitment, such as receiving your monthly newsletter or participating in another way. This can often highlight your benefits so that they will be willing to join your association when the time is right for them.*

Know When to Back Down

Unfortunately, not every prospect is going to become a member, and for some, pushing further only serves to aggravate your lead. Still, even rejection can be a valuable learning opportunity.

- *Reevaluate how you are qualifying your leads. Is there a better way to determine who is more likely to join your association?;*
- *Reevaluate your pitch. Is it too pushy? Are there too many unanswered questions? Is it unclear what the value of your memberships is? Is the value high enough to justify the cost of the memberships? Perhaps you need to add additional levels of membership to attract members with different budgets and needs; and*
- *Evaluate the competition. Does a similar organization offer something more attractive or more affordable? What can you do to make your value proposition stand out?*

Once you've converted your prospect into a member, you'll want to continually delight them so that they stay engaged with you and your association. Download the eBook *Scoring Member Engagement* to find out how to spot rising stars and fading members so you can target your engagement activities.