

MEMBER RETENTION

2017 Winner: The Enrollment Management Association

Entry Title: It's all about retention

Project Overview/Elevator Pitch:

Over time, our organization has evolved to include research and data to support admission and enrollment professionals in their ever-evolving positions, as well as additional professional development events. After the 2008 economic decline put pressure on independent school enrollment, the organization shifted its strategic plan to focus from the singular entry point of admission to institutional strategic enrollment management, expanding its stakeholder base outside the admission office.

Last year, our small membership team realized that as an association serving an industry in decline that was primarily known for one product, we had to get creative in order to understand our members' perceptions and needs. That meant hitting the communication sweet spot to see a greater overall retention percentage and an increase in first-year renewals, while more fully understanding membership engagement and satisfaction. With that ambitious goal in mind, our team focused on different modes of communication, utilizing segmented lists to ensure higher engagement and satisfaction. The result was a retention rate well above the association average.

We treated first-year members completely separately throughout this plan, developing an entire year of touch points that were delivered by various team members throughout the membership cycle. We developed a composite engagement score to track each member's engagement with our organization. Completing this task involved the time and development assistance of our IT team, which worked to incorporate this metric into our internal database. Now, anyone in our association can see, at a quick glance, where an individual member falls in terms of engagement.

Project Goals/Objectives:

Our organization was dealing with a reputation as elitist and profit driven, so our goals were simple: retention, retention, retention. For many years, we were plagued with an outdated internal database, so simply coalescing the data to understand our historic numbers was a challenge. Objectives included:

Determine historical retention rates and set goal accordingly. This included understanding membership associations as a whole, and what constitutes a "reasonable" retention number.

Invest in technology to allow staff to do a data "deep dive" and really understand our members' use of services and loyalty to our association.

Define engagement with our organization and understand and implement ways in which this could be measured.

Create and disseminate a quick annual satisfaction survey to allow us to have our finger on the pulse of members' perceptions of our association.

Strategy:

Our main strategies and objectives centered around our communication efforts. We carefully considered different modes of communication and decided to kick off our renewal with a hard copy mailing and an item of swag. We then moved to a targeted, regularly scheduled email campaign and carefully combed through contact lists to ensure we were reaching the decision maker in the office who would complete our online renewal form. We also coordinated with our IT team to ensure our online renewal form was quick, easy to understand, and still gave us all the details we needed. Lastly, we got on the phone. We called and connected with every non-renewed member to make sure they knew it was our renewal period and were reminded of our plethora benefits. We got help from other departments to complete this and reminded our fellow colleagues that membership is everyone's job!

Success Metrics:

1. Maintained a 96% retention
2. Increased retention for first-year renewals from 79% to 85%
3. Achieved overall satisfaction score of 90%
4. Computed a composite engagement score for every member

Learn More:

[See renewal letter here](#)

Association website

www.enrollment.org