

AUGUST 2018

THE ASSOCIATION REPORT

GOING GREEN

THE GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

REVIEW AND RENEW

THE ART OF (SPONSOR) SEDUCTION

THINK DIGITALLY

WHERE HAVE ALL THE DEALS GONE?

The Association Report is a free quarterly newsletter dedicated to showcasing the successes, innovations, and learning experiences of associations in Australia and New Zealand. It is produced by Answers for Associations, a network of leading consultants and businesses dedicated to providing tangible solutions to Australasian associations.

Subscribe at **www.answers.net.au**

WELCOME

CEO's message

A new financial year gives us all an opportunity to look at ways we can future-proof our associations.



And just like that, we saw the dawn of a new financial year filled with opportunities for successful membership renewal campaigns and untapped revenue streams.

In this issue, we share a mix of strategies on how to plan ahead and future-proof your association's communications,

allowing you to generate member value, increase retention and create significant revenue opportunities.

No matter the encounter, I always grade my experience based on customer service and perceived value. Using this simple formula, the inclusion of smart applications like association management software can automate your communications around member renewals and event registrations, making life so much simpler and increasing the value for your members.

Then there is the ability to adapt your association member directory into an online lead generation tool that directly links your members with interested suppliers from your industry. Another of the many available tools we will discuss in this edition.

We also have a number of events coming up this quarter to help your association reach its goals. Want to discover how powerful revenue streams can be generated when you focus your resources and time on the areas that will generate your association the most return? Join us for the "Discover Your Inner Cashcow" workshop in September, where our team of experts will share with you the hidden revenue streams in your association.

I hope you enjoy this issue and welcome any feedback or suggestions you may have.

Angela Shelton
Chief Executive Officer
Answers for Associations

GET IN TOUCH

If you have any suggestions or feedback please email
Angela directly at angela@answers.net.au



Events calendar

Your guide to upcoming events for association executives.

AUGUST

How to Develop a High-Value, Sustainable Sponsorship Program

This one-day workshop has been designed to provide you with the skills, structure and inspiration to develop a high-value sponsorship (partner) program that will massively increase the income of your association or charity. Julian Moore's interactive presentation will provide a fresh perspective to developing a lucrative sponsorship program that will bring benefits to your members, your association and your partners.

Where and when: Wellington (22 August), Sydney (24 August), Adelaide (28 August), Melbourne (29 August), Brisbane (31 August)

Time: 9.30am-4pm

SEPTEMBER

Discover Your Inner Cashcow

Get your income streams MOOVing with this fast-paced session that provides a huge number of ideas about how to generate strong income streams for your association. Hear different presenters share their ideas and experiences in generating income streams, and leave with a list you can start implementing immediately.

Some of the topics that will be covered include:

- The ultimate cashcow – third party programs that generate income while providing a great value proposition for members.
- Meetings moolah – ways to generate additional revenue from your meetings and events.
- Snag that sponsor – tips on what corporate companies are looking to sponsor at this moment.
- Corraling the herd – the best ideas for leveraging greater income from existing products, services and stakeholders.

And much MOOre...

Where and when: Sydney (14 September), Melbourne (17 September)

Time: 9am-4.30pm

OCTOBER

Association Leaders Retreat

The Association Leaders Retreat enables association leaders to connect about relevant issues in meaningful ways to produce positive outcomes for you and your organisation. Over three full days, association leaders will share insights, generate fresh ideas, and engage in stimulating discussions in a range of fabulous locations around Alice Springs.

We guarantee there will be:

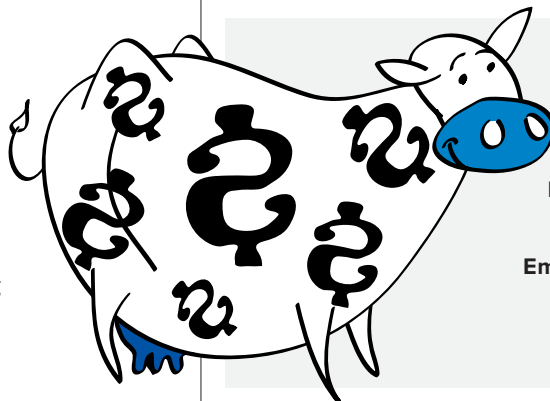
- NO formal presentations
- NO boring PowerPoint
- NO stuffy conference rooms

There will be:

- LOTS of stimulating discussions
- TONS of amazing people
- HEAPS of unique experiences

This event is designed to delight, surprise and engage delegates in ways that will ensure strong, powerful outcomes. Association CEOs, Board members, and senior managers will find this event particularly relevant and rewarding.

Where and when: Alice Springs (21-23 October)



GET IN
TOUCH

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EVENTS

A meeting of minds

Angela Shelton, CEO of Answers for Associations, shares some magic moments from the 2018 Australasian Society of Association Executives conference and exhibition.



Having never visited Adelaide before, I didn't quite know what to expect when we met up there in late May for the Australasian Society of Association Executives (AuSAE) annual conference and exhibition.

I certainly didn't leave disappointed. Attended by many association executives, this year's conference was a fantastic showcase of innovative speakers, networking opportunities and an amazing array of culinary delights.

Of the event's design, AuSAE's CEO Toni Brearly says, "We wanted to bring a lot of thought leaders together such as Fiona Kerr and Dr Gill Hicks, to share ideas and inspire new action around association management. But we also wanted to ensure we provided ample social and networking opportunities for our delegates, which we know is very important to them."

The Answers team established a temporary home in the custom zone – styled with a selection of modern couches and practical bar tables – creating comfortable spaces for delegates to sit, relax and share their stories and experiences.

A personal highlight for me was the mid-conference sneak peak at the giant pandas at Adelaide Zoo, which was beautifully complemented by a formal sit-down dinner at the Adelaide Oval. While it was a cold night, the glass windows overlooking the oval created a lovely atmosphere for delegates to create meaningful relationships and share ideas.

SAVE THE DATE

ACE 2019 will take place on 11-13 June in sunny Brisbane.

To lock in your super early bird rate, please email the AuSAE team at info@ausae.org.au



"Really appreciated the keynote speaker's technique of introducing basic science then showing its relevance to our work and societies."

– Cheryl Power, vice president corporate affairs, Australian Society for Microbiology





“Once again AuSAE ACE was a fantastic event. Everyone I chatted with had a valuable insight to share and every conversation was beneficial. It’s refreshing to be in a community of people with different passions, skills and backgrounds.”

– Nicki Kelso, general manager, Suicide Prevention Australia

Going green

Smart associations are seeking sustainable events, bringing added benefits to their membership, as well as the globe.

Once considered a passing fad, sustainability in business today brings very real, measurable benefits to companies and associations on a global level.

While the end goal is to protect the planet for a better tomorrow, businesses that adopt sustainability practices today also stand to reap the rewards in the form of an improved brand image and competitive advantage, increased productivity and in some cases reduced costs, while also making themselves more attractive to sought-after employees and investors.

For associations in particular, the conversation around sustainability is an ideal opportunity to initiate different conversations with your current members, while also working to attract new ones.

“Smart associations are using sustainability as a competitive edge,” says Lynn Fairbrass, Director of Association Relations for MCI. “Their longevity is dependent on retaining and recruiting members and competition is rife not only with different associations within the same industry, but also the accessibility of relevant knowledge from many digital platforms.

“So, if you’re ready to shake up your association offering, starting conversations around sustainability is a great way to engage and attract up-and-coming professionals.”

Thinking about how you can apply that same message to upcoming events is another opportunity not to be missed. According to Fairbrass, association executives need to think about how they can leverage services provided by local Destinations Management Organisations (DMOs), Convention Bureaus (CVBs) and venues to accelerate their organisation’s sustainability strategy – something that many event planners are starting to do.

A good starting point

To set off on the right foot, Fairbrass recommends following these key steps:

- **Content.** Develop an event experience and program that promotes knowledge sharing and co-creation of new sustainability solutions, processes and products within your industry.
- **Think legacy.** Consider what can be left in the city after the event. How can the event develop knowledge in the local community and catalyse social change? And how

can event delegates be engaged to support this with their skills and muscles?

- **Partnerships.** Reach out to the DMOs and ask them for introductions to key local players in the private, public and not-for-profit world.
- **Make it competitive.** Research the sustainability programs of the city and its events industry. Include sustainability in the request for proposal (RFP) and decision-making progress, and assign five to 10 percent of the selection criteria to compliment the sustainability factors of the destination.
- **Walk the talk.** Choose suppliers who have solutions that can help to reduce waste and carbon emissions, and use sustainable and healthy materials to produce the event and feed your guests.

An exercise in sustainability

One event that well and truly reflects these principles is the Banksia Foundation’s Sustainability awards.

Founded in 1989, the Banksia Foundation seeks to raise the profile of the current sustainability issues in Australia and recognises those whose initiatives are both an encouragement and an example for others to follow. Being able to assess and share this fountain of knowledge and energy is instrumental to making a real difference and driving enduring change.

The Banksia Foundation is also working with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the UN Global Compact to provide an interesting, informative and valuable platform to educate on the Sustainable Development



“You need to commit to fully understanding the environmental, social and economic imprint of your event in order to minimise negative impacts.”

Goals (SDGs). From 2018, they are presenting their SDG Challenges and their solutions through this forum. This provides them with a first-class opportunity to engage the public on the SDGs and who is doing what to get Australia closer to achieving these goals.

“We’ve been working with the Banksia Foundation for five years now, sharing our expertise and experience on how to make a high performance, sustainable and successful event,” says Fairbrass.

By focusing on seven key areas, the Banksia Foundation partnered with MCI to create an event that not only celebrates outstanding sustainability achievements, but also serves as a prolific networking event, in which the latest developments and revolutionary visions of promoting sustainability around the country are presented, discussed and awarded.

“You need to commit to fully understanding the environmental, social and economic imprint of your event in order to minimise negative impacts – you have to dedicate yourselves to ensuring that positive actions occurred pre, during and post-event,” adds Fairbrass.

Sustainability in seven steps

So, how did they do it? By ticking these key boxes:

- **Strategic planning.** The planning team leaders met to identify the sustainability risks and opportunities that affected the event. A strategy has to be developed with clear objectives and actions to increase the event’s sustainability performance.
- **Stakeholder engagement.** Through a series of meetings with key suppliers to communicate sustainability

requirements and brainstorm how to improve the sustainability of the event.

- **Supply-chain management.** All venues, suppliers, staff, crew and volunteers sourced with sustainability in mind.
- **Operational optimisation.** The event management team made a series of responsible decisions in the purchasing of materials and services. This can include signage, printing, catering and selection of venue and location.
- **Communication.** The creative teams produced brand concepts, communications strategies, video and immersive brand experiences in high-impact forms.
- **Measurement and reporting.** Measure impacts, evaluate and communicate transparently and regularly.
- **Certification.** Events take a heavy toll on resources, society and the environment. They can generate significant waste, put a strain on local resources like water or energy, or even ignite tensions in local communities. With international standard ISO 20121, any event can be made sustainable, no matter its type or size.

“We have learnt that by embedding sustainability into our clients’ events we can improve efficiency, the participants’ experience and accelerate innovation,” says Fairbrass. “Our sustainability practices reduce costs, improve environmental impacts, build brand reputation and give back to the community – proving that sustainability in business is so much more than a passing fad.”

POINTS TO PONDER

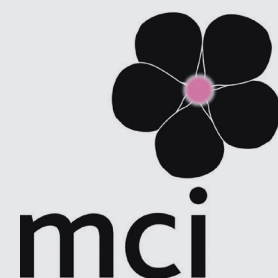
Does your association factor in sustainability when planning events?

Are your direct competitors taking a sustainable approach to their events?

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Review and renew

When and how you run your renewal campaign can have a big impact on your member retention rate.

Membership renewals are an essential component of any association's strength.

But in order for your renewal campaign to be a success, there are some important factors to consider.

Renewal period

The common periods for association renewal campaigns each have positive and negative aspects. The one you choose should be the most efficient for your association in terms of time and money spent, with opportunity to incentivise.

Anniversary – when renewals are sent out after one year of membership, at the end of the month joined. While this method can simplify the process of determining membership fees, given no pro rata is required, it can be inefficient time-wise as you are consistently managing renewals throughout the year. You can, however, incentivise this renewal method by offering a discount to those who process their renewals before the due date.

Annual – when all renewal fees are due on the same date, either at the end of the financial year (30 June) or the end of the calendar year (31 December). This rolls the renewal process into a once-a-year effort, although the fees per member will obviously differ. Another variable of using this method is whether your association and membership have the time and money at this annual milestone to dedicate to the process. For example, at the end of the year members are either on vacation and/or have limited funds due to the purchase of gifts and other things associated with holiday cheer. An added bonus of the annual renewal is the number of incentives you can offer renewing members. If your renewal date is mid-year for example, you could offer a deal whereby users joining in February receive three months free.

Quarterly – when renewal fees are due during the quarter of the year the member joined. While this method means the renewal-based workload can be more evenly distributed throughout the year, it can make application and reporting processes more complicated. And if members join in the last quarter of the year, the same challenges posed by the end of calendar year renewal period apply.

Making it easy

One of the best ways to encourage membership renewals is to keep the process simple. Ensure members have clear channels of communication with your association, whether by phone, fax, post, online or in person. You should also offer easy methods of payment via these same channels.

The option to set up a direct debit can be a very beneficial

payment method for both associations and members. Think about it like this – the less action a person needs to take to renew their membership, the better. The use of direct debit also means members would need to actively cancel their payment if they chose not to renew, which can lead to an uptick in retention rates. Another bonus of this method is that fees can be drawn out monthly, making the cost more palatable to members than a once-a-year lump sum.

Before the renewals go out

Start the process early by getting in touch with members to send the message that they are valuable to your association. Ensure your database is up to date and encompasses each member's renewal period, so you can target them a month in advance. If running an annual renewal campaign, you could send out a yearly report documenting your association's achievements before the process kicks off. Make sure to follow up with a phone call – an added personal touch to thank people for their (hopefully) continued membership.

Keep up your renewal efforts

Did you know 50 percent of the reasons why people don't renew their membership has nothing to do with the association? It could be personal or professional matters, but it's likely not you. When running your renewal process, remember to include an element of reactivation campaign. Consider a 'cheeky renewal campaign', where renewal notices are sent to people who have lapsed their membership.

But if members opt not to renew, try and figure out why so you can identify any trends. Give recently lapsed members a call about a week after their membership expires, expressing genuine concern and interest about their membership satisfaction and why they didn't renew – it could very well be the push they need. Remember to keep the grace period short, however. Cut off access to membership services around one month after the lapse of the renewal.

Lastly, at the end of your renewal period, it's essential that you measure and analyse your statistics. Understanding who did and didn't renew and why should be an instrumental part of your renewal strategy going forward.

POINTS TO PONDER

Are you using the right renewal period for your association?

How user friendly is your renewal process?

The art of (sponsor) seduction

Are you ready to attract new partners in 2019? The time to start cultivating these new relationships is now.

Sponsorship in its purest form is displaying your brand name loud and clear on, say a sports jersey or stadium arena. But in the not-for-profit sector, sponsorship is an entirely different ball game.

You are essentially after a partner – meaning the ‘sponsors’ require a return on their financial investment. This could mean the ability to research your association’s membership demographic, access to your communications channel or engagement with members at association-based events – all of which can lead to the sale of more of your new partner’s products and services.

Another difference between traditional sponsorship and partnership relationships is the length of time the latter take to cultivate. To secure a partnership you need to appeal to the higher echelons in an organisation – be that the marketing director, company director, CEO or the board – which means greater time and effort spent. Therefore, not-for-profits and associations should already be thinking about securing partnerships for 2019 now. That means figuring out how to access potential partners, determine what you can offer them, and proposing an implementation plan to be outlaid early next year.

Associations generally need to do the seeking, usually because corporate companies either don’t know you exist, or how you can help them. It’s up to you to educate them about who you are, who you communicate with, what you do and how you do it, and what they would get out of the partnership.

Planning ahead

It all begins with identifying who your members are. Segment them into demographics by gender, age, geographical location and job title. Then, break it down further by determining the top 40 products and services

those demographics use on a regular basis in their workplaces or daily lives. For example, if your membership base is primarily in the manufacturing business, the companies they work for will be using mass amounts of electricity, so an energy company would be a good partnership target.

The next step is to approach the proprietors of the 40 products and services on your list, demonstrating that you have access to a sizeable group of potential or existing customers. Propose the methods of engagement the company could have with this group – such as exclusive access to your membership portal, events or research.

The approach

The number one way to make the approach is to draw up an enticing, tailored proposal that highlights what’s in it for the corporate company. Send a personally addressed, hard copy of this proposal to the company (avoid the easily deletable email) and follow this up with a phone call 10 days later to set up a meeting. This is no sales pitch – you are putting forth how you, with unfettered access to a significant portion of their consumer base, can work to achieve results for them.

What’s in it for you?

Partnerships can easily account for half of an association’s total annual revenue. Failure to lock them down means associations can miss out on a huge revenue stream. This income could translate into enhanced communications with members, bigger and better events, services and advocacy. Or even more staff and nicer offices. As you can see, the process is long and involved, but the benefits are many. So, it’s worth every association’s while to start working on developing partnerships now.

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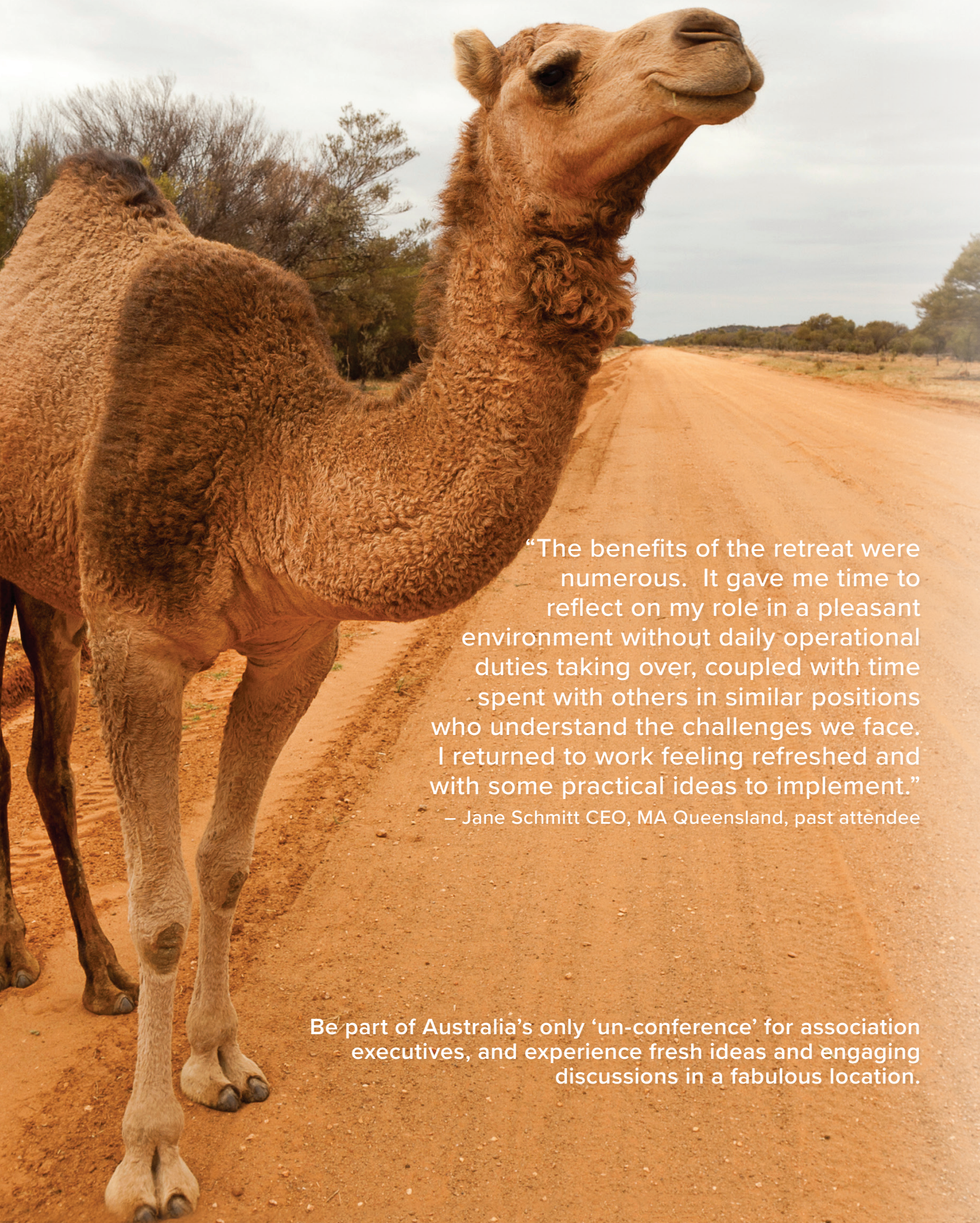
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Association Leader's Retreat

Alice Springs 21-23 October, 2018



“The benefits of the retreat were numerous. It gave me time to reflect on my role in a pleasant environment without daily operational duties taking over, coupled with time spent with others in similar positions who understand the challenges we face. I returned to work feeling refreshed and with some practical ideas to implement.”

– Jane Schmitt CEO, MA Queensland, past attendee

Be part of Australia's only 'un-conference' for association executives, and experience fresh ideas and engaging discussions in a fabulous location.

Join association executives from around Australia and New Zealand in Alice Springs to share insights and knowledge over three jam-packed days.

This is no regular conference. There will be absolutely no speakers, no powerpoint presentations and no conference rooms. Delegates can participate in a range of different conversations with other like-minded leaders, including:

SUNDAY 21 OCTOBER

Fearless conversations

This stunning location is a great introduction to Alice Springs and a wonderful opportunity to get to know fellow delegates on a deeper level. The session will incorporate fearless conversations around topics selected based on delegate-provided information upon registration.

An Old-Fashioned Country Welcome

Join us for an evening you won't soon forget. A good old-fashioned welcome – with a few surprises thrown in – will make for a great way to break down barriers between people and start the foundations for a robust exchange of ideas.

MONDAY 22 OCTOBER

Herding Cats – Building Positive Board-CEO Relationships

The success of your association is determined by the quality of the relationships between board members and the CEO. This session allows delegates to discuss tips, tools and tactics for building positive board relationships.

Remaining Sustainable in an Ever-Changing Environment

Achieving organisational sustainability in a rapidly changing environment is challenging. Earth Sanctuary has managed to achieve a carbon neutral position via integration of multiple power sources and eco-friendly housing. Chat with the owner and other participants over damper about overcoming organisational sustainability challenges.

Building a Successful Organisation by Creating Healthy Workplaces

When implementing strategy, the impact of organisational culture – good or bad – can be exceptionally powerful. Participants in this session will explore ideas for fostering healthy workplaces in an interactive session with Jane Schmitt, CEO, Australian Medical Association Queensland.

The Challenge of Creating Consistently Awesome Events

When it comes to events, attracting young members, developing fresh formats, and monetising event programs are common issues for associations. Delegates will discuss the challenges and strategies they use to address these.

Technology: Is it the Headache or the Aspirin

Technology provides the ability to streamline processes, communicate more effectively and enhance the member experience. It also provides the ability to generate large headaches for CEOs seeking to make technology choices in an ever-changing environment.

Evolving Communications, Evolving Associations

When the telegraph was built in Alice Springs, it connected Australia to the world. Communication from the UK went from three months to four hours. We've come a long way since then. Delegates will discuss the impact of changing communication, and how to adapt to ensure sustainability.

The Challenges of Delivering Education into Rural and Regional Areas

The challenge of delivering education to rural areas is not confined to associations. Delegates will visit the historic School of the Air to learn how they evolved a successful educational model. Peek into a live classroom before engaging in discussions with other delegates on this topic.

Navigating the Politics of Association Leadership

As association leaders we have developed the skills and awareness necessary to navigate complex behaviours around the boardroom table. But, as leaders, we need to help junior staff navigate the political landscape and feel empowered to overcome potentially confronting situations.

TUESDAY 23 OCTOBER

The Simplicity of Purpose

Sarah Brown from Purple House is an unassuming woman with an inspiring story to share. Winner of the Indigenous Governance Award, her strategic plan is both simple and powerful with a strong alignment between purpose, values and tangible outcomes. This informal chat grants you the opportunity to discuss her success and the unique way they enabled one small non-profit to make a difference.

Vision to Implementation – The Art of Operationalising Strategy

As associations leaders, we need the ability to develop a compelling vision, convert that into a strategy, and transform that strategy into action. This requires a diverse skill set and presents the opportunity for pitfalls. Delegates will discuss strategies for navigating this crucial process.

Are We Doing More Than Paying Lip Service to Diversity and Inclusion?

With the increasingly diverse cultures in our staff, board, and memberships it's important for organisations to develop a truly inclusive operation. But many are unable to do this due to a lack of prioritisation, interest or the ability to develop and implement appropriate strategies. Participants will explore themes of diversity within their organisations.



Register online at www.answers.net.au

Stay connected

Don't waste your chance to create a member for life – offer benefits that will give the people who join your association what they need.

Studies indicate that individuals join associations because of the perceived benefits they offer.

Factors such as professional development, unique resources and the credibility of being associated with a certain community are the key drivers that motivate people to sign up. Belonging to an association also opens doors and puts people in touch with like-minded colleagues.

While this sounds good on paper, many member-based organisations are falling victim to a common pitfall. This trap occurs when associations are heavily reliant on tired and outdated models to retain their members. It's common practice to only contact people after their membership has lapsed. But this approach is in stark contrast with the demand for more personalised relationships between people and their chosen professional community.

The majority of association members might feel there's value in their membership and are happy to renew, a significant percentage can be left feeling indifferent. This is only heightened when the members-only contact with the association is in the form of an invoice at renewal time. This sort of interaction can leave members asking themselves, "What's in it for me to be a member of this association?"

Pay up

Many professional associations are only engaging with their members when they're looking for payment, or after membership has expired. It shouldn't come as a surprise that by the time this has occurred, the member already has a bad taste in their mouth and feels reluctant to renew, despite the benefits. It's a never-ending cycle of acquiring and retaining members, and then losing them. The harsh reality is, if you don't provide the right support, you may find yourself empty-handed. Without members, associations cease to exist.

Balancing the demand of advocating, driving positive change, creating safe work environments, offering professional development and being flexible in delivery, all while maintaining tight budgets, is a juggling act. While electronic communication is cost-effective and efficient, nothing cuts through the noise of busy lives and offers the hand of friendship better than a phone call.

Be a friend

So, what's the solution to prevent churn and retain the existing members who you worked hard to acquire? Put yourself in their shoes and ask, "What have we done for you

lately?" Multiple touchpoints throughout the year allows you to engage members and address this crucial question.

The concept of building relationships between organisations and members for mutual benefit is not new. Strengthening these relationships means paying attention to all their actions and interactions with you – what do your members really want from being associated with your organisation and how you are responding to that? Ask yourself if your association is doing enough to maximise your membership participation and awareness, taking into account how your members feel about your association. Don't be afraid to ask them what they really think.

Be proactive, not reactive

Being proactive means employing frequent mid-cycle touchpoints during the associative relationship. This allows your members to feel connected and gives them the ability to raise issues or make positive recommendations, which can prove to be a valuable free resource for the association.

"You may only get one chance to make a lasting impression and win a member for life, so take time to make sure every stage of your communication is enjoyable."

Actively collecting and updating your members' information is important to understand the depth of their relationship. Don't wait until their membership has lapsed, when they feel reluctant to pay their invoice or when their opinion of your services has lost momentum – pick up the phone today.

A case study in customer care

A peak body for the recruitment and staffing industry in Australia and New Zealand was worried that stretched internal resources meant they were unable to reach their members in a timely or consistent manner.

Using casual and temporary staff to conduct their follow-up calls didn't deliver the positive service experience that they wanted for their members either. Realising that change was necessary, the association reached out to Optimum Contact after hearing of their success working

with other organisations. Optimum Contact carefully tailored their message to the organisation and implemented a communication strategy focusing on reaching and reminding members of the value and benefits of their membership. The general manager of operation and member services for the association states, "Optimum Contact have real conversations with our members, and they know how to reinforce why they should continue to belong to our association." This service has been invaluable, as they not only received 500 percent return on their initial investment, but they were presented with valuable information on their members for future use.

Before it's too late

Member retention initiatives need to focus much further upstream. Firstly, start to shift your efforts towards retaining your members from the very first time they engage with your association. When a potential member gets in touch, consider a pre-emptive call to establish whether your association is actually suitable for what they want to achieve. Additionally, reaching out and calling a new member in their first two months of membership will increase their connection with your association. Help new members navigate your available resources, make the appropriate introductions and invite them to upcoming events that will get them moving in the right direction. You may only get one chance to make a lasting impression, so take time to make sure every stage of your communication is enjoyable.

Secondly, the ability to predict your member's needs before they know them based on the information you have collected will further strengthen your relationships. You can track their pain points and address them accordingly, or avoid them all together. Delving deeper into your database and learning more about your members can also help you predict what direction a relationship will take. Chances are, if one member is asking a question, so will others.

Characteristics segmentation is an effective tool to gain a comprehensive understanding of your members. Identifying certain characteristics allows for a more personalised approach to each individual. Key attributes such as – what stage a member is at in their career life cycle, what their specialisation or area of interest is, and even their salary –

can provide valuable information to build a comprehensive member profile. This data can determine what level of support will be offered, any pain points and how they can be addressed, and any upcoming events that may be suitable for their needs. Offering this level of personal support will deepen the relationship between member and association.

Relationships are like battlefields; if you don't have a clear strategy in place, you will lose your territory. So, what can you do today to improve your member retention? All you have to do is talk to your members.

Expand your support

If anything, focusing your resources on building lasting relationships with your members and providing them with genuine value as a reward for your time, money and energy will see a big reduction in churn. Like many membership associations, the quality of your support systems has a significant impact on your ability to retain members. A lack of internal support or fear of stretching staff too thin may prevent associations from delivering the level of consistent service they should be offering. This is a double-edged sword as it can further confirm the association's reputation for only contacting members when chasing a payment. Consider outsourcing this service to a team of experts who are trained to engage with association members.

If any of these issues resonate with you, consider employing an organisation such as Optimum Contact to support your member engagement team so you can deliver on your strategic plan. A 100 percent Australian owned and operated organisation, Optimum Contact offers a team of highly trained professionals who can tailor their communication style to your association.

POINTS TO PONDER

How in tune are you with your membership's needs?

Are you offering adequate support to
your membership?

Optimum Contact

READY TO MAKE YOUR MEMBERS
FEEL TRULY VALUED?

Membership renewals ● Past member reactivations ● Generating
event delegates ● Member engagement ● Database updates



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Think digitally

How one association future-proofed their communications by adopting digital channels.

Professional associations are constantly working to prove their value and relevance to members.

Applying a digital-first strategy to your communications allows you to both engage your membership more frequently and reach new audiences.

This became a priority for Engineers Australia (EA) when they developed a fresh strategic vision to portray engineers as the people who create the world we live in.

It was time for EA to more effectively engage their existing and potential membership by providing regular content that can be read and shared on any device, anywhere, anytime.

To help EA achieve that vision, Mahlab conceptualised and designed the content brand *create* – engineering ideas into reality. The new strategy included *create* digital, a content hub that consists of regularly posted articles and videos, shared through a weekly newsletter and daily social media updates.

Future-proof your association's communications

Associations too often rely entirely on their print publications and events to communicate with their members. This approach may have worked wonders in the past, but it's no longer enough. These days your members address tiny illuminated screens more often than real faces. If the thought of taking a digital-first approach to your association's communications makes you uneasy, hear this: your organisation is perfectly placed to flourish in the online world. You just need to deeply understand your members and be forward-thinking. Digital isn't the

future anymore, it is the present, and associations need to embrace this reality.

An audience-first mindset

Before creating your digital-first communications strategy, it's crucial to understand the content consumption habits of your existing and potential membership. Once these habits are clearly understood, you can create the right content, share it on the right channels and deliver it to your audience at a time that suits them. With the development of *create* digital, EA is aiming to grow their audience by reaching Australian engineers who haven't yet joined, particularly engineering graduates who could become lifelong members. And for existing EA members, the hub has provided greater access to quality content more often. A digital-first, multi-channel content strategy was evidently the right solution to achieve these objectives and reach both a new and existing audience.

The results have been more than clear. Launched at the end of January 2018, the content hub has attracted more than 218,000 unique users so far, which represents more than half of the total number of engineers in Australia. The website user demographic confirms that *create* digital content is reaching and engaging the right audience, with more than 40 percent of users aged between 18 and 34 years old. The hub's social media channels are not only used to redirect traffic to the website, but also used to spark conversations within the community.

So far, *create* digital's content has received more than 185,000 post engagements since the launch. Proof that a good digital-first content strategy adds value to your audience and your organisation.

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Where have all the deals gone?

Don't despair, the end of financial year still presents many great opportunities for purchasing a new vehicle.

With the end of financial year (EOFY) sales come and gone, there's been a lot of talk about the great deals that were on offer around the dealerships.

If you were lucky enough to have the funds available and the timing was right for you, then you're probably driving your new car right now with a smile on your face, thinking about the savings you made.

But, what if you weren't in a position to buy a car before 30 June? Have you missed out completely? Have the deals all dried up?

"When you buy a bonus car, you'll have a little shaved off your warranty period, but you'll get cash shaved off the purchase price too."

The good news is; there are great deals still out there. Right now, dealers want your business as much as ever, and they're possibly even more determined to shift units.

Throw me a bonus

Why? Well to begin, with all the recent EOFY activity, there's a buyer vacuum out there and sales have dried up.

On top of that, and possibly even more significantly, they have cars on the floor that are known as 'bonus cars' that need to be moved.

A 'bonus car' is a brand new car that has been RDA'd – that is, its warranty has officially started, and the manufacturer has been notified of this.

When you buy a bonus car, you'll have a little shaved off your warranty period, but you'll get cash shaved off the purchase price too. For example, instead of the 5-year warranty, you might get a 4-year, 10-month warranty, but you could also get \$1000 or more (the factory bonus money attached to the car) off the price.

There may also be tax reasons why buying a new car in the new tax year suits you better, so talk to your advisor for the latest ATO advice, including the \$20,000 instant asset write-off.

Of course, the best time to buy a car is when you're ready. But the new year is filled with new opportunities, so don't despair if you missed out on the EOFY sales.

POINTS TO PONDER

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Opening doors

Association software is key to ongoing growth, so how can you ensure you get the right service?

Increasingly, association management software (AMS) is becoming a critical part of the day-to-day management and growth of an association.

Modern AMS transforms traditional manual processes into automated ones; from new memberships, renewals, communications, training, ecommerce and website management. The result being that the quality of the services an association provides to its stakeholders is a direct extension of the quality of the AMS and how well that AMS is integrated into the association.

What is a software ecosystem?

A software ecosystem is a reference to the related activities and services that go into implementing and maintaining the software.

These include:

- project management;
- design and content placement of website;
- training and support;
- ongoing updates and support.

Closed ecosystems

Traditional AMS vendors bundle all aspects of their softwares' ecosystem into one package. The vendor provides the project management, design, content placement, training, ongoing support and updates. In most cases, the association has no options in this and cannot leverage in-house skills or existing service providers. A closed ecosystem is great for the vendor as it allows them to maximise revenues from a single client. However, it has several considerable disadvantages to the association as they are locked into the ecosystem that the

vendor provides, resulting in inflated and often unnecessary charges as well as substandard quality. Essentially, a closed ecosystem creates a monopoly marketplace in which critical services are delivered. And we all know what a monopoly marketplace does to the price and quality of the services being provided.

Benefits of an open ecosystem

Modern AMS vendors are embracing the open ecosystem and developing their solutions to allow associations to access services in a manner suited to their needs and budgets.

An open ecosystem allows associations to choose how they access the activities necessary to maximise the success of implementing and running a new AMS. It enables the association to leverage existing in-house skills and service providers they already have a relationship with, or choose from a marketplace of high-quality service providers.

For example, many associations already engage (or have an in-house) designer to develop their brochures, magazines and marketing material. It makes sense for this designer also to be involved in the design of the website and its elements (styling, promotional banners, etc.). An open ecosystem allows and encourages the association to use one designer for all aspects of their design work, which reduces overall costs, and maximises the quality of design and brand development.

Another critical element to a successful implementation of an AMS is training and support. With an open ecosystem, there's a range of independent training and support providers to choose from; usually in your city or state, and skilled not only in AMS but also in associations and how the software can best be used for the specific challenges they face. In short, an open ecosystem is a free marketplace, promoting competition in pricing and increased quality in delivery.

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Plug in to your members' needs

A case study in how adopting a lead generation online tool can greatly benefit an association's members while also creating an additional revenue stream.

Staying ahead of the competition and keeping members happy has just become much easier for one Adelaide-based association.

This is thanks to online specialist Marketplace IT (MIT), which has recently deployed its technology and support services to benefit the South Australian division of the Australian Institute of Conveyancers (AICSA).

The organisation is the peak body in South Australia representing conveyancers and acquired Marketplace IT's help to develop an online program known as Matching Service. The program creates business opportunities for both AICSA and its members by directly linking interested clients with conveyancers.

How it works

MIT's Matching Service plugs into AICSA's online directory of member conveyancers and enables clients visiting the organisation's website to request a quote.

The program asks the potential client a set of questions formulated by Marketplace IT and AICSA that are designed to provide member conveyancers with information pertinent to quoting for the job. Matching Service then anonymously sends the request to a group of five conveyancers who most closely fit the client's needs and provides them the option of quoting on the job. The conveyancers can choose to decline the opportunity to provide a quote, and the program will automatically repopulate and send the request to a different conveyancer. Conveyancers pay AICSA a one-off administration fee of \$10 per quote, giving them a one-in-five chance of having the client accept their quote.

Member benefits

According to AICSA's CEO Rebecca Hayes, the program

has multiple benefits, including educating clients about the conveyancing process and bringing business opportunities right to the door of member conveyancers.

"Many consumers don't understand the role of a conveyancer or the complex legal environment they are transacting in. So it's important that they are able to compare 'apples with apples' which Matching Service allows them to do," she says. "The program also clearly displays the many cost components that form part of the overall transaction, so for the client it is very transparent. For the conveyancer, they know everyone using the quoting system is quoting on the same terms which makes it a very fair process."

AICSA also felt MIT's Matching Service would provide a reputable option compared to other conveyancing comparison websites, which are not managed by the professional body.

Organisational advantages

MIT's Matching Service is an application programming interface (API) based technology that is fully customisable and easy to deploy into any organisation's directory, according to Marketplace IT's general manager Nick Carter.

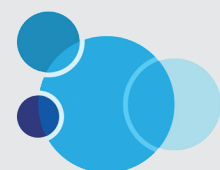
"The program transforms any directory into an intelligent bidding, quoting or matching service that finds new customers for its members," he says.

With MIT's Matching Service, AICSA can provide added value to their membership, thereby improving retention, and generate new and sustainable incomes by charging affordable fees for the use of the service, says Carter. Marketplace IT currently manages the entire process for AICSA, which simply invoices member conveyancers each month when they have used the service. An effective and innovative solution without the cost of precious time and energy.

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MERCHANDISE

Gifts that keep on giving

A look at how promotional products can help associations meet their business goals.

Merchandise is a powerful tool. Did you know that mail containing a promotional gift (3D mail) has a 100 percent open rate?

Research from the 2017 Promotional Products Association International consumer study shows that promotional products make customers feel six times more appreciated, invoke three times higher loyalty and motivates over twice as many recipients to take action over other advertising mediums. Oksana Koriakova, founder of Impero shares some of the ways associations can use merchandise to achieve stellar results.

Boost attendance and engagement at your next event

When used strategically, merchandise can help associations meet an array of event goals – from the beginning to the end of the delegate journey. For example, you can offer a special gift that encourages people to register by a set date. While during the event, merchandise can be used to help create an amazing delegate experience. A lot of this is to do with the quality and appeal of your merchandise. “If you get the most expensive delegate bag you can find, people will go ‘Wow’ and will want to keep it for 10 years, whereas the cheapest bag might be left somewhere or might not even be taken at all because it provides no value,” Oksana says.

What if you created a redeemable merchandise offer with a call to action that encouraged people to continue engaging with you long after the event? For example, you could give away a mug with a one-hundred-dollar discount off their next conference ticket or direct them to complete a specific action on your website. You can then successfully measure how many people received the mug and took the action, enabling

you to measure the return on your investment and use that data to improve your marketing strategy.

Make merchandise work for you

If you are looking for new ways to improve membership renewal, attract new members or generate extra revenue, a promotional product campaign can help. By segmenting your members and creating a customer journey for each subdivision you can dramatically improve your member’s engagement.

From a simple welcome pack to a small gift halfway through the journey or even three months before their renewal, it can all be used to build engagement, trust and value. When attracting new members, associations can send promotional material to demonstrate who they are, who their members are and the benefits of joining. Just make sure all your promotional collateral is congruent with your brand and brand value. The top three reasons why people keep promotional products are: fun, functionality and trend. Whatever you do make it memorable.

One of our marketing strategies is to send a nail file promoting Impero that says, ‘For cool & fun marketing ideas, keep us on file’. It’s simple, low cost, and a very effective way to make people go ‘Wow’.

Finally, think about developing cool merchandise that can be sold to generate extra revenue. Once again, think value before cost. Imagine you are an airport association and you made models of the latest aircrafts or a collectable range of mini toys: people would get excited and buy them and think of your association. At the end of the day, merchandise is not about a logo, it’s about the engagement that the right merchandise delivers. Feel free to get in touch for some assistance with your strategy and ideas.

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OPPORTUNITIES

Sector opportunities

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Australian College of Nurse Practitioners, Melbourne

Responsibilities

- Report to the chief executive officer and be responsible for identifying policy issues relevant to the industry in consultation with key stakeholders.
- Prepare policy submissions and lobby government representatives to support the achievement of industry goals, and contribute to the design and development of strategic policy initiatives affecting members.
- Represent the organisation on a number of committees, coordinating member representation at forums, and produce briefing papers with recommendations to the College executive – including the national president and chair, and policy and advocacy portfolio.
- Part Time Role – .06 FTE based on 24 hours per week. The College offers flexible working hours to support commitments.

For more information about this role, contact Geraldine D'Costa at geraldine.dcosta@acnp.org.au or 03 8593 9682.

SPONSORSHIP & EVENTS COORDINATOR

General Practice Registrars Australia (GPRA), Melbourne

Responsibilities

- Event coordination including pre-event planning, budgeting, promotion, logistics, sponsor and speaker support, registration and reporting.
- Coordinate GPRA exhibition booths at external stakeholder conferences.
- Identify potential sponsors/partners and develop targeted proposals and sponsorship plans.
- Facilitate ongoing relationships with sponsors and partners, ensuring that obligations surrounding events and sponsorship are achieved and sponsors/partners receive a high level of service.

For more information about this role, please contact Kevin Broadribb at kevin.broadribb@gpra.org.au or (03) 9629 8878.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Australian Booksellers Association, Melbourne

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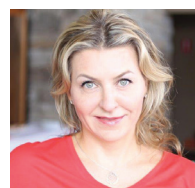


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