



By Tony Rossell

Three Steps to Engage Volunteers in Membership Marketing

There is a big world out there, and volunteers can make a significant impact in helping you reach out to others and grow your PTA membership. In fact, word-of-mouth marketing tied for the top spot as the most effective method of new member recruitment in Marketing General's 2010 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report. So getting volunteers' help is not just a good idea, but an essential part of membership development.

Here are three steps to get volunteers plugged in to your membership marketing efforts.

1. Motivate them with why membership is important.

Someone once said, "Anything in life is too difficult without an adequate answer to the question 'why.'" To get a volunteer motivated to help with membership, we need to help them answer "why."

First, help them to understand your association's story. This is your vision, values, and mission and how they are changing society and your members' lives. We all want to be a part of making the world a better place.

Second, help them get in touch with their own story of how membership has influenced their life and success. I can speak from personal experience here. I am a long-term member of the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE). Through my membership, I have had the opportunity to publish more than 20 articles in ASAE periodicals, contribute chapters to two ASAE membership books, and meet hundreds of colleagues. I can also track about half of my new clients to my involvement in ASAE. Keeping in touch with my membership story motivates me to share ASAE with others.

2. Tell them how they can be involved.

Knowing and using the membership lifecycle—awareness, recruitment, engagement, renewal, and reinstatement—can be so important. One size does not fit all when it comes membership marketing. Some volunteers will be great at cold-calling potential members, but calling people they do not know may be outside the comfort zone of others. Within the entire membership lifecycle, most volunteers can find a place that is right for them.

Some members may be more than happy to focus on engagement—helping new members get involved in the association. Others might be great at following up with their friends and colleagues to get them to renew. Personal contact tends to be a key ingredient for increasing renewals. Associations with renewal rates over 80 percent are significantly more likely to use peer-to-peer member contacts to help with renewal efforts. Volunteers also might be perfect to follow up with lapsed members to gain important insights and understanding of why the member did not continue with the association.

3. Help them establish a plan of what to do.

We all know that the best intentions without clear plans and goals do not work. So added to these steps is working with volunteers to establish a written plan of action and specific goals. In a fully developed volunteer structure, an accountability system that includes regular check-in with other volunteers could be put in place. But a simple first step might be to have the volunteers write out their membership goals, put them in a self-addressed envelope, and have leadership mail them a month after setting the plan as a reminder.

Whatever strategies you choose, remember that membership recruitment efforts are not just the job of a membership chair. Membership recruitment is something every volunteer can do.



Tony Rossell serves as the senior vice president of Marketing General, Inc., in Alexandria, Virginia, and is a frequent writer and speaker on marketing topics. He can be reached at (703) 706-0360 or Tony@marketinggeneral.com.

The “Why” of PTA

National PTA President Betsy Landers asserted the “why” of PTA this way, “In a time when our children face ever-growing challenges, we are the persistent voice speaking on their behalf—our only agenda, their welfare. We are at our heart an advocacy association. As a member of our association, you are part of something larger, something that has a profound impact on the everyday lives of millions of families.”

Now ask yourself, “What is my personal connection to PTA and our mission? How can I share my passion for PTA with others?”

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