

Your Publication Is A Marketing Tool *By Scott Oser*



Almost every association, big or small, corporate or individual membership, has a publication. In most situations it is the tangible benefit that members count on receiving as a benefit of belonging to an organization. With just a little creativity, staff time, and investment, you can turn it into a valuable marketing device.

No matter what the size, look, or frequency of your publication, you need to be using it to your advantage. You need to use it to acquire new members, retain existing members, and sell your products and services to both groups. Here are four ways to do it.

1. If you aren't already inserting

member acquisition cards into your publication, you should be. Insert cards can be bound into almost any publication at a reasonable price and can really help drive membership numbers. If money is a factor, you can produce a black and white insert card. If money is not an issue, then you can produce a four-color insert card.

My suggestion is to start with a black and white card or a two-color card and see if it generates any new memberships. Once you see that it is generating memberships and the ROI is high enough, you can start testing different creative ideas including four-color. I would also recommend starting with a two-up card. If one card has already been removed, then there is another

one still there for another individual to use. Having a two-up also allows you to potentially use two different creatives, or even use one card for direct orders and one for gift orders at the appropriate times of the year. If your publication is thick enough and your printer can handle it, you may also want to consider doing blow-in cards as well as bind-in cards. Blow-in cards, which fall into your lap when you open a magazine, may be seen as annoying, but in my experience they do work.

2. Another marketing opportunity you

Continued on page 8

Continued from Oser, page 1

should consider implementing is a **cover wrap**. One of the best ways to use a cover wrap is to put a last-issue message around the last copy a member will receive before their membership expires. You can also use a cover wrap to advertise your annual meeting, promote a special product or service, or even to send a survey to your membership.

3. A slightly more complicated way to use your publication is as a **renewal delivery device**. There are many printers that can now help you do what is commonly referred to as attached mail, in which you work with your fulfillment

company and your printer to attach a renewal effort to the front of your publication. Since your members are reading the publication, it is very unlikely that they will miss the renewal notice. This should result in increased renewal rates, but it is something that needs to be tested.

4. Yet another way to use your publication as a marketing device is probably the simplest and most overlooked. Almost all associations struggle with **generating traffic to their website**. Your publication is the perfect way to do that. You should be pointing people to your website in your magazine at every opportunity. You can have pointers at the end of articles, in a

special web section and anywhere else you think it makes sense. This will cost you nothing, but you do have to have the links up and running on your site.

I am sure you can think of lots of other ways to use your publication as a marketing tool. As I mentioned earlier, it just takes a little creativity and a small financial investment, and you are on your way to making your publication work much harder for you. ☐

Scott Oser handles association marketing for Palm Coast Data (www.palmcoastd.com). Contact him at 301/943-2547, sdoser@gmail.com.