

Membership **Newsletter**

Issue 5

What does it take to cut costs and improve efficiency at the same time?

With no economic recovery in sight it may just be the right time to investigate the benefits of Print Management. You really do get something for nothing!

As a membership organisation printing and mailing are likely to represent a substantial cost to you, not only directly, in terms of the money paid for the production and distribution of brochures, leaflets, folders, documents and membership cards but also indirectly, through the time spent procuring, administering and managing the process.

With current economic conditions so tough and with every advantage sought to improve efficiency and cut costs, more and more membership organisations are turning to centralised print management.

Print management offers so many advantages. Not only in terms of cost savings but also by providing qualitative improvements and streamlining administration through online ordering, stock control and reporting.

Inside this Issue

- Cut costs and improve efficiency
- Are you doing enough to recruit and retain members?
- Ramblings of an Old Stager
- Brand awareness and promotional products
- Focus on Charities – Fundraising
- Top Tip!

Whatever your area of responsibility; marketing, membership, fundraising, administration or finance, print management should help you achieve your goals. The financial controller will be provided with reports and management information to help with budgeting, the marketing and membership manager will be handed control of all artwork and imagery as well as seeing improvements in brand consistency, and the administrator will be relieved of many of their departments most mundane and thankless tasks.

In simple terms, print management puts you, the client, in total control of your printing and mailing budgets. You are provided with the tools to do your job more efficiently. Stock control, image and artwork management and online call off facilities all tailored to your requirements and provided without cost.

Why not invest an hour of your time to hear more with absolutely no obligation? It could be the best decision you have made on behalf of your organisation this year.



Heritage Organisations Wildlife Parks Professional Associations Unions Zoos
Environmental Campaigns Libraries Museums The Arts Learned Societies Medical Charities
Sports Associations Theatres Institutions Car Owners Clubs Alumni Associations
Fauna & Flora Conservation Guilds of Craftsmen Leisure Interest Associations
Federations Political Parties Campaigning Charities Attractions Moting Organisations

Are you doing enough to recruit and retain members?

When it comes to the apocryphal clever repost there is probably no one more often in the dock than Winston Churchill whose wit is infamous. However it was the South African golfer Gary Player who uttered one of my favourite quips. When asked if he was a genius or just a lucky golfer he is reputed to have replied, "I am a lucky golfer. But the harder I work the luckier I get".

And so it is for membership organisations. Complacency, lethargy and inactivity are often the main culprits behind falling membership. There is no magic formula but working hard to improve 'the little things' can make a huge difference.

If things are tough and the membership numbers are dropping I suggest a review of your processes and communications. You do not necessarily need to make wholesale changes; very often a tweak here and a tweak there is all that is needed. Below, I have come up with ten ideas to get you started. None of which are earth shattering in themselves but put together could make a difference.

1. Focus on new members as lapsing rates tend to be highest for new recruits. Consider a welcome phone call, a personal welcome letter from the CEO or perhaps a free gift for those who renew by a certain date
2. Target an increase in the percentage of your members who pay by direct debit and offer an incentive or discount to cash payers who transfer to direct debit.
3. Target an increase in the percentage of your members who play an active role in your organisation whether this is playing the lottery, volunteering or attending local events.
4. Ensure your membership application form is simple and easy to complete and you provide as many joining and payment options as you can. Pre-paid return envelopes will help.
5. Ensure that joining from your website is a painless and easy process.
6. Use current members to recruit new members through member get member schemes and through local and specialist events. Consider giving members an incentive to recruit. Even in the 21st century, word of mouth is a great way to promote the benefits of membership.
7. Segment your database and be specific when communicating with members particularly with the all important subscription renewal. Remind them what the benefits of membership are and how they relate to them as individuals.
8. Target to improve membership retention (in part through initiatives highlighted above) and put in place a written strategy to achieve this.
9. Use the telephone to get closer to members and to gain a better understanding of their desires and aspirations.
10. Use new media such as Facebook and Twitter to promote your organisation. After all it's free!

Ramblings of an Old Stager

There is much talk in the not-for-profit sector about 'new media' and the importance of embracing the Social Networking revolution. Facebook and Twitter are testament to the pace of change and I fully support the need to take part. However, strangely as it may seem, I am not convinced that these new phenomena will have as much impact on the membership organisation as many believe; at least, not yet.

Of course you should embrace change and understanding the nature of the beast is important if you wish to exploit its potential. But I have a feeling that, in this Brave New World dominated by the young, bright lights, fast cars and digital media, it may be an old stager that brings the house down (excuse the mixed metaphor!)

The old stager I refer to in this context is 'the telephone', invented by Alexander Graham Bell over 130 years ago. You see, membership organisations are dominated by those of 'more mature years' and 'us oldies' actually like the personal touch. New media has its place but think of what you can achieve with the humble telephone.

I predict that, while the digital age has been the main catalyst for the growth in membership over the last couple of decades, the telephone will play an increasingly important role in the next decade.

Members are becoming savvy to the old tricks. Maybe twenty years ago members really did believe that their subscription renewal signed by the Chief Executive was a personal communication from the boss himself. We all know now, that in reality the CEO's signature is nothing more than forgery on a grand scale churned out by a laser printer.

Give them a call

The telephone is both affordable and personal; often the perfect means to communicate for the membership organisation. It gives members back a feeling of worth and strengthens the bonds between organisation and member. In addition there are many practical reasons for using the telephone. Perhaps the most pertinent of which is that, even after receiving a renewal notice and a reminder by post, many lapsed members are unaware that they have neglected to pay their annual subscription! A gentle nudge is often all that is required.

In addition to reactivating lapsed members the targeted telephone call has many other practical applications such as upgrading memberships, converting cash payers to direct debit, welcoming new members and conducting surveys. A telephone campaign is also quick and inexpensive to set-up and easy to test.

I am by no means a Luddite and understand the importance of Social Networking, as a means of reaching new audiences but don't under estimate the power of the telephone in your quest to reduce membership attrition rates.

For more information on telephone marketing services please call 01293 773221 and ask for Sarah.

Brand awareness and promotional products



How do you make yourself stand out from a crowd? How do you ensure you are seen, heard and most importantly remembered? It's a tough challenge particularly when resources are scarce.

But the fact is, that we live in competitive times and visibility is crucial to your wellbeing. Your 'brand' is what distinguishes you from your competitors. It's why the most successful global organisations spend billions on advertising. It's why the whole world knows coca-cola. A little closer to home its why 'RNLI' is one of Britain's most enduring and successful acronyms.

There are many facets to establishing and maintaining brand awareness but for membership organisations promotional products can often play an important part. For most, TV and radio advertising is out of reach and even advertising in the national press and specialist magazines is usually expensive. Carefully selected promotional products, on the other hand, can be very cost effective. Furthermore they can be targeted at a selected audience and generally have a good shelf life.

The key, of course, is to get the very most from your budget and often, when cash is tight promotional products will give you the greatest visibility at the least cost. Be creative and imaginative and ensure your target audience is captured, amused, engaged or intrigued. Stand out from the crowd and be remembered.

There are many statistics to support the view that promotional products give you a better return on investment than many other forms of advertising. It may surprise you to know that sending a pen in a cold mailing can uplift response rates by up to 55%; free gifts can increase membership renewals by as much as 18%; and sending a practical gift such as a baseball cap or T-shirt can enhance membership satisfaction rates by as much as 28%. All impressive statistics I am sure you agree.

If you would like to know more about promotional products and how they can improve retention and recruitment of members please call David Lonie on 01293 773 221 or e-mail sales@computastat-group.co.uk.

Your Questions Answered

Until recently we had used the services of a design agency for much of our marketing collateral. When I approached them last month and asked them to return our artwork I got a shock to discover that they owned the 'copy write' and would only release the artwork for a substantial charge. What are the legal implications?

This is not an uncommon situation as many printers and designers will include a clause in their terms stating that they own the rights to any copy or design that they produce. In itself, this may be considered reasonable as it protects them for work they have undertaken. What is less reasonable, however, is to use the clause as a means of extorting money from a client who has already paid for the work. You would expect to be charged an administration fee for the time it takes for the designer to load and send artwork files but no more. Legally, however, you may not have a case and unless the money involved merits a call to a solicitor, it may just be salutary lesson learnt!



Fundraising

Many members will happily add a donation to their annual subscription if they believe that it will go to a good cause. Explain the importance of a donation and how the money will be used. If possible be specific rather than vague, adopt a humble and grateful tone and avoid coming across as being arrogant or unsympathetic to the financial situation of the member.

The same goes for legacies. If you want your members to consider leaving you a legacy you must communicate and persuade.

Top Tip

Members are at their most vulnerable in their first year of membership. It takes time to feel part of an organisation and lapsing rates decline over time. So put in place a strategy to ensure new members are made to feel welcome. Think about the contents and presentation of your welcome pack and consider a personal welcome telephone call. Monitor first year's renewal rates carefully and work hard to reactivate lapses and those who cancel their direct debits.

Our Services

- Design, Print & Mailing (including storage and distribution)
- Subscription Renewals & Reminders (full bureau service)
- Enquirer's Packs
- Welcome Packs
- Questionnaires & Surveys
- Lapsed Member Reactivation & Telephone Campaigns
- Membership Cards
- Fundraising Consultancy & Appeal Mailings
- Legacy Marketing
- Data Cleaning & Profiling
- Database Development
- Gift Aid Auditing & Promotion
- Online Print Ordering & Management
- Administration & Support Services
- Response Handling & Fulfilment
- Magazines & Newsletters
- Promotional Leaflets & Brochures

The Computastat Group specialise in membership marketing. Our focus is to help our clients to increase membership and improve on their return on investment. We have 20 years of experience working with some of the largest and most successful membership organisations in the UK as well as many smaller institutions, associations and charities.

Membership Audit

Why not take advantage of a **free of charge** Computastat Group membership audit ?

During a membership audit we analyse your membership communications processes, which covers renewals, lapsed members, enquiry handling, recruitment, Gift Aid and more. Our focus is to offer guidance and advice to help you increase your membership. Following an audit we will provide you with a written report of our findings and recommendations all FOC.

For a free consultation please contact Andrew Atiyah, on 01293 773221 or email membership@computastat-group.co.uk

Written by:

Andrew Atiyah – With a background in finance, marketing and general management and over 25 years experience of working with the not-for-profit / membership arena Andrew focuses his attention on helping clients improve their ROI. With an in-depth understanding of database marketing techniques Andrew has written and run training programmes and seminars on membership and related subjects.

Nick Pease – Communications and copywriting: Nick is a highly experienced, award-winning copywriter who has worked for some of the most creative and successful London agencies (McCann-Erickson, TBWA, Publicis, The Creative Business). Over the years Nick has worked in every business sector and every medium, from television and radio through to direct marketing, B2B and online. Within Nick's experience he has worked with a number of membership-based organisations, including Amnesty International, Greenpeace, RNLI and The Royal Photographic Society.

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