

# Enhancing Member Value

Developing an Association  
affinity program



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# Developing an affinity program

## How can we do more for our members?

This is the continual questions Associations and membership organizations are asking themselves. Improving member value while simultaneously increasing the appeal to join are critical considerations. Often, the solution can lie in developing a member benefit program, often called an affinity program. These programs exemplify the Power of A: associations being great for their members and for industries their members operate in. The question is, what do members need and want that can be things their association can extend that line up with the value proposition.



## Sounds great, what could go wrong?

Sometimes member programs don't work because when they're set up, they weren't done in a way that the members perceived valuable. Let's say, for example, that the biggest benefit that the members get from an association is their advocacy role and efforts. Well, it could be a big change for them to then turn around and say, "We're going to offer you an insurance program! We want you to buy it from us." Members might not respond well to that because they don't understand why the insurance program lines up with their advocacy. The critical component is ensuring that whatever it is you're doing for your members fits what you do as an association and aligns with your current member value proposition.

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To avoid heading down the wrong path, we recommend taking the following steps:

Cycle of Affinity program development

1. **Comprehensive membership analysis** – any affinity program’s potential begins with a thorough understanding of those to whom it will be presented. We need to understand commonality, nature of association’s value proposition, and general buying habits to determine possible marketability.
2. **Program consideration** – based on the analysis we then consider the programs available for the affinity plan. Not every product may be considered valuable or a value-add to the Association. Sometime even those considered valuable, may not be purchased by the end user through an association membership if such purchases are normally made independent of such an affiliation. The success of program selection is uniquely tied to the market analysis of the membership and an understanding of their buying behavior as it might pertain to their association membership: simply put, *will they buy THIS from YOU?*
3. **Marketing plan outlined** – once the right product(s) have been chosen, a plan to introduce them to the members must be outlined. Again, depending on the current level of engagement and the methods of desired communication, a strategic understanding of how the association’s members interact with the organization (how do they prefer to communicate, and when are they the most engaged?) is needed for successful implementation.
4. **Program implementation** – moving from the marketing plan to the plan roll-out is critical in that, early sales cannot be the only measurement of plan success. Some programs take time to catch on, and so a roll-out can often last over 1 year before an appropriate determination of its success can be measured.

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5. **On-going program monitoring and development** – once members start buying, you want them to remain satisfied with their purchase, so ensuring the program lasts over the long-term is equally as important as generating early success. Routine monitoring will often involve member surveys and layers of member engagement to identify how well received this program is and how valuable it is considered.



### It's a long game approach

The best way to ensure your members buy from you is to strategically engage with them to ensure they see value over the long term. You don't ever want to set something up and have only a 12, 18 to 24-month window to assess it and determine whether it's successful or not. Any member program needs to be assessed over at least a three to five-year period and given that much time to make sure that it does work. Be in it for long haul. That's also what you want to look for when it comes to how you partner with somebody. The affinity broker and supporting companies delivering your member benefits need to support the Association for years to come. Strategic collaboration will always deliver the best results.

# We are 2 CAE's on a mission, and we can help!



When a financial industry veteran, who is both an ASAE Fellow and a CAE, gets together with a tech-savvy and somewhat edgy financial professional who is also a CAE, good things happen! Never hurts if those two also happen to be father and son.

Allen Haney was the first broker to receive the ASAE All Star Award in Insurance and Financial Services. Highly respected in the non-profit community for his ability to solve problems by developing unique solutions that make a huge impact, he has served the Association community for over 40 years.

Brian Haney is a 16-year financial professional experienced in banking, employee benefits, investments, Retirement plans, and Insurance. As a specialist in working with privately-owned business, his expertise and keen insights provide businesses, organization, and affluent families with innovate strategies to meet their insurance and financial goals. A self-avowed tech junky, he runs the "That's My Financial Guy" podcast, and has been awarded as one of NAIFA's 4 UNDER 40, The Washington Business Journal's 40 UNDER 40, and NAIFA's 2018 Diversity Champion. The marriage between his private business expertise to his father's association experience gives their firm a substantial edge in the marketplace.

The Haney Company offers Associations financial services solutions, guidance, and advice based on decades of experience and the highest level of personal attention. As the only financial services firm owned and operated by not 1, but 2 Certified Association Executives, our clients can be assured we don't just understand financial services and insurance, but we share a unique understanding of Associations and the day-to-day challenges Association professionals face. We know associations and their members and want to support you in delivering a superior membership experience. WE ARE 2 CAE'S ON A MISSION!