



# Why Member Engagement No Longer Means Face-to-Face

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# Why Member Engagement No Longer Means Face-to-Face

If your association struggles with member engagement, you're not alone. Here's why:

1.

## No Time

It seems like everyone is pressed for time. From running the kids to sporting events to working longer hours, time is at a premium.



2.

## Less Participation

Younger members are participating less in onsite events. These "digital natives" are more inclined to take part in online groups, chats, and forums.



3.

## More Competition

There are simply more groups and clubs - both virtual and in-person with which associations must compete.



## The World Has Changed. Have You?

There's no reason to continue to play by 20th century rules. Your members no longer need to show up to all your events to be engaged. Face-to-face meetings still have great value, but they aren't the only way to build commitment and a sense of belonging.

This guide highlights several of the trends and tactics associations should be using to drive participation and engagement in the 21st century.



# Tactic #1

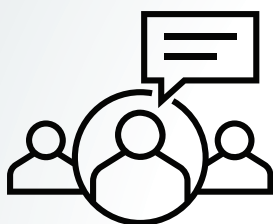
## Build Awareness Through Social Media

Most of you have some sort of social media presence. But do you use it as a strategic tool to promote your association? Are you using it to initiate discussions and dialogue? Don't overlook social media as one of the greatest distribution channels ever created to build awareness and drive engagement.



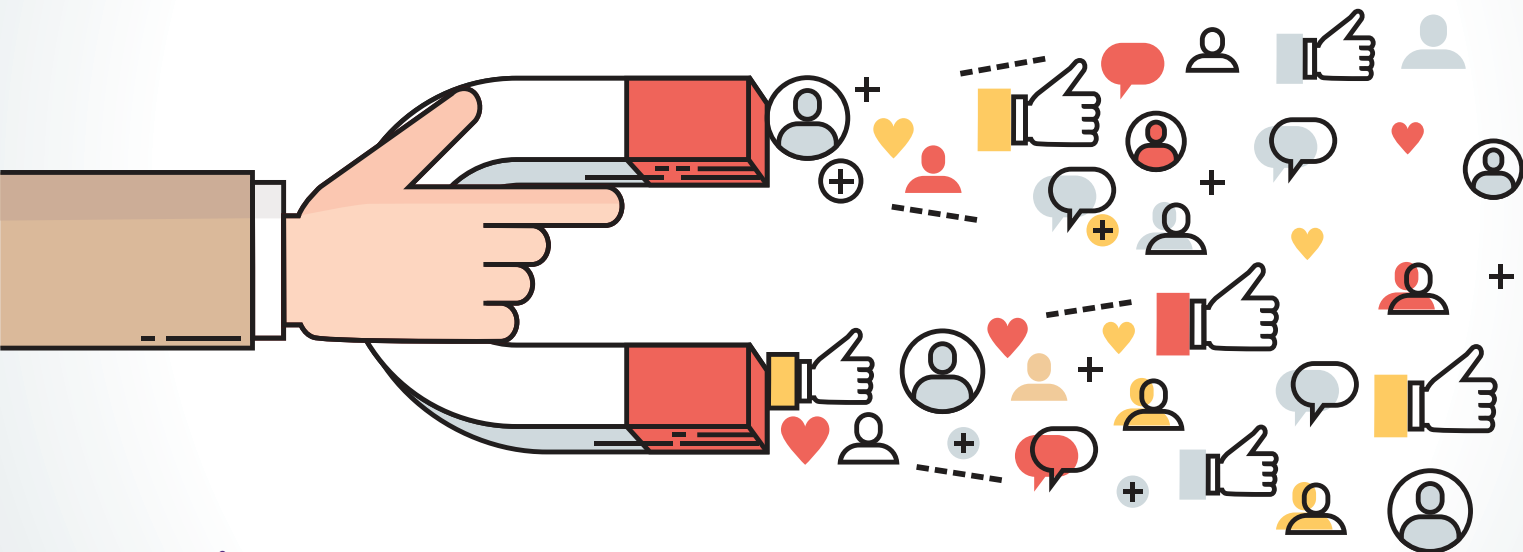
### Think Bigger

Social media gives you an open forum to your entire community, not just members. If your Facebook page becomes a regular source of information and thoughtful discussion, you'll draw a much larger audience and more awareness.



### Be The Authority

If prospective members start to see you as "the authority" because you're a source of trusted information, they'll be more likely to follow you, or better yet, share your page. Think of it this way. With social media, you can engage people where they already congregate rather than requiring them to come to your website.



### Cast A Wider Net

Erik Qualman, author of *Socialnomics* said, "we will no longer search for products and services, they will find us via social media." Social media has become a critical tool for how people find products and services. And its impact will only grow. Chew on this:

- 92% of children in the U.S. have a digital footprint.
- Over 50% of the world's population is under 30-years-old, meaning the percentage of socially engaged people will only increase.
- 93% of marketers use social media for business. Associations should, too. If you ignore this channel, you do so at your own peril.

# Tactic #2

## Build Trust Through Content Marketing

Content marketing is the creation and distribution of informative content online. If you think about the people you serve, odds are good that not all of them have visited your website. However, the vast majority have probably ventured online to look for information that you likely have. If you have compelling content online that is indexed with appropriate keywords, you increase the likelihood that they will find your content when searching for information.

### Here's How It Works

If you want information on new flat-screen TVs, what's the first thing you do? You Google it. Likewise, if prospective members want information on the types of services you offer, what is the first thing they do? Exactly... they Google it. If you have content that drives engagement, make it digital and distribute it online.

### Where To Publish Content

Don't stop at your website. Include all your digital channels. The more places, the better.



There are countless different types of content your association can leverage to capture a larger audience and drive engagement.



Blog posts



White papers and reports



Videos



Newsletters



Guides and checklists



Brochures

## Tactic #3

# Use Storytelling to Drive Digital Engagement

Content is critical for engaging members and prospects, so don't overlook the power of storytelling.

Start with a member success story with a storyline that typically goes like this:



1.

Outline a member's pain points or something they struggled with.

2.

Describe the solution they found to the problem, such as the benefits received from joining your organization.

3.

Highlight the positive outcomes which followed the solution.



Your members joined for a reason. They have challenges for which they believe you have solutions. Prospective members with similar issues would love to learn how your members solved those issues, so let them do the talking.

## Be An Influencer



Social media gives you an open forum to your entire community, not just members. If your Facebook page becomes a regular source of information and thoughtful discussion, you'll draw a much larger audience and more awareness.

Consumers trust the wisdom and recommendations of peers and professional groups more than those of companies or organizations. In recent years, BrightLocal's Local Consumer Review Survey reported:

- 79% of online shoppers trust online reviews, and
- Over 70% reported that positive online reviews influence where they buy

## Tactic #4

# Build a Following Through Thought Leadership



Thought leadership is about positioning yourself or your organization as a voice of knowledge and expertise. It helps people connect your association with specific topics when looking for information.

Your association has information and offers services. That makes you an expert. People want to hear from authorities. So why not provide your knowledge in a way that positions your association as an expert so you can drive greater awareness to your organization and its mission?

## The Internet Opens The Door

Go online to build thought leadership in a variety of ways beyond just providing content.

### **Webinars**

Conduct webinars and invite people to listen in as a learning opportunity. Just like that, you have a following.

### **Public Relations**

Distribute press releases and engage in media outreach. Reporters love story ideas, which in turn will give you great coverage.

### **Repost Others' Content**

Align yourselves with other thought leaders by reposting their content. Or even better, get permission to repurpose their content via your own online properties like your website and social media. The next time someone in your organization speaks at an event, post the video online in short segments. All of these things will help build thought leadership for your organization.



## Tactic #5

# Capture Prospects' Attention with Inbound Marketing

In the olden days of marketing (which wasn't so long ago!), marketing was all about outbound, interruptive campaigns. If successful, these tactics would gain the attention of their intended audience for a short period of time.



The internet changed that. We no longer need to try to interrupt people from their thoughts. Instead, we try to connect with them when they're thinking about the products and services we provide. We do this by offering great content, which becomes the magnet that draws interested people to us.



But it isn't enough just to engage them. We must also capture them at this moment of engagement. A great way to do that is by providing them with content compelling enough that they will fill out a form, thereby giving us their name and contact information so we can connect with them later.

Your website should have a visible call to action that allows people to download content or sign up for topical alerts. This call to action should be straightforward and placed on multiple pages. People won't keep coming back to your website over and over again to find the information they need – you have to make it easy for them by providing solid content and the ability to opt-in to receive your communications.

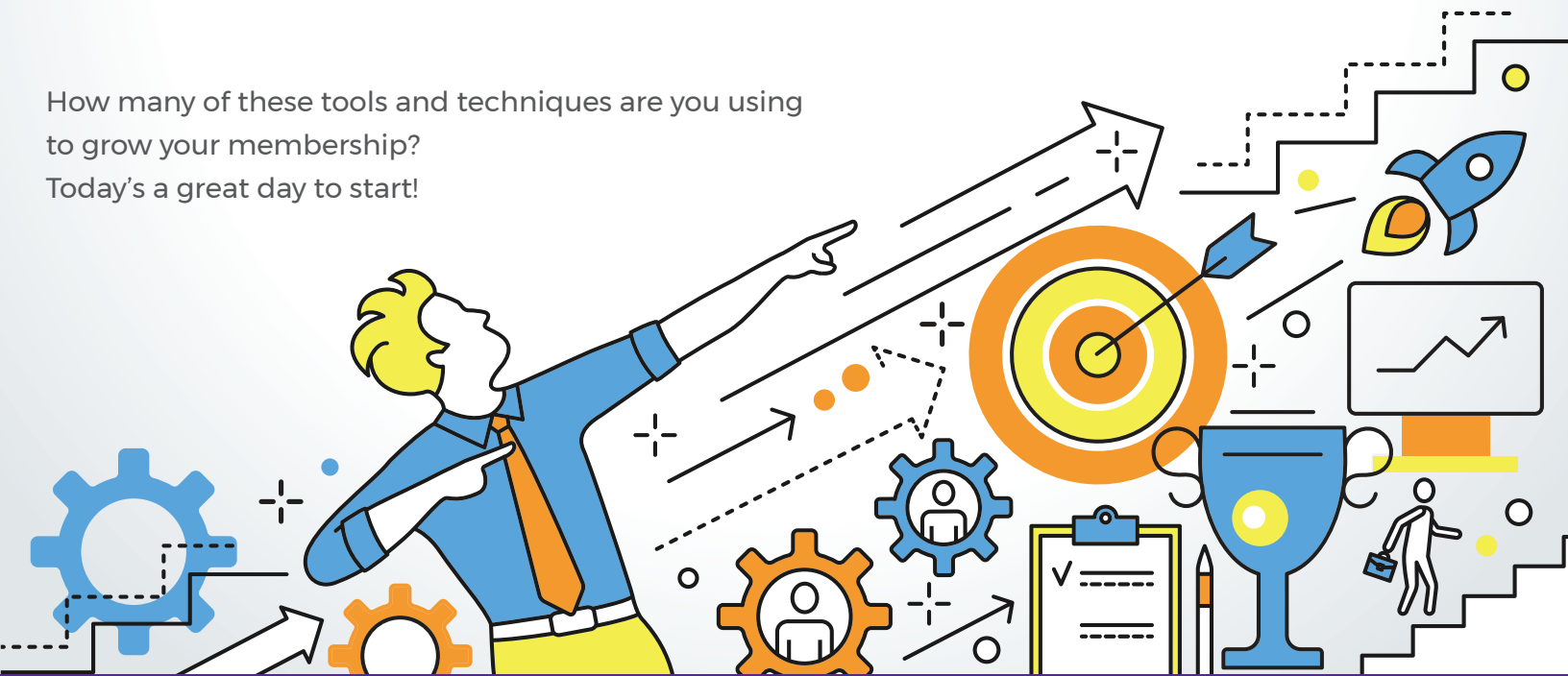
Relevant content changes the nature of your dialogue from a one-time chat to an ongoing conversation. It's the secret sauce that will help turn prospects into members!

# LET'S REVIEW

Membership-based organizations of any size should embrace marketing – especially online marketing. Here are the five trends that are sure to be game changers:

1. **Build Awareness Through Social Media**
2. **Build Trust Through Content Marketing**
3. **Use Storytelling to Drive Digital Engagement**
4. **Build a Following Through Thought Leadership**
5. **Capture Prospects' Attention With Inbound Marketing**

How many of these tools and techniques are you using to grow your membership?  
Today's a great day to start!



## About GrowthZone

GrowthZone AMS helps organizations grow and retain membership, engage and inform members and prospects, and streamline tedious tasks.

The cloud-based system is powerful, easy to use, and designed to manage all the day-to-day operations of your organization.