

Think of a marketing strategy as the blueprint to reach your annual objectives. The strategy helps you to create your story, guides your plan, and then helps you deliver that promise to your members AND your Board of Directors.

How do you develop an effective marketing strategy? First, spend a little time thinking about a few key areas of your business. This will create the groundwork for an effective Association marketing strategy. Combine this with member feedback and focus on your annual objectives to complete your mix.

Analysis Is Step One

1) MARKETS. You know a lot about the Real Estate market; do you know just as much about your current members and their generational, age and cultural differences? What do your members want? What do they need from you to support their success? Are there segments of your membership that you are overlooking? To start, ask them very specific questions. Consider a member study that will help identify key areas to add real value to the members' experience. Then use the results to build your plan for delivering improved services and member support.

2) COMPETITION. Is your competition other Associations (nearby, state, county or local)? Are you in competition with other educational providers? Evaluate your competition and determine what you offer that is unique. If you think you are the lucky one with no competition, do you realize you are in competition for your members' attention? To be seen as truly valuable, you want to promote what you do that is unique and exceptional to your members.

3) DISTRIBUTION. How do you effectively distribute your messages? When did you last sit down to look at every piece of material that leaves your office to ensure your members receive the best organized and prioritized mail! Stay abreast of new technology that will engage new and young members. Many associations are blending hard copy with electronic formats to appeal to all generational segments.

4) POSITIONING. We in the marketing world call this *branding*. Branding is "Black Gold". It's hard to find and then establish, but once you do, you hit the prize for building Association value. Branding is the promise you make to your membership. It's the way interact with every REALTOR®, affiliate and the public. Branding helps bring attention to your unique strengths. Your brand shows your expertise, that you are authentic and consistent in what you deliver. To accomplish this, first, fully understand what you do well, and not so well. Find your unique qualities – every Association has them – then tell your story to deliver your brand promise.

5) PROMOTION. Be clear, concise, and be careful how many times you hit "send"! Create a magazine, write a newsletter, but think about what you are sending. Create the boundaries for what you send to your members (too many luncheon reminders is simply annoying to the member). Do you use your website effectively as your storefront? With the increased availability of web services (Google, YouTube) and listing websites (Craiglist, Google Base) be sure your site is up to date, easy to use, and link to other useful information. Show your members you embrace these technologies.

An Association Marketing Strategy you will actually use

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6) PRICING. What is your pricing strategy? Does non-dues revenue include bringing in special programs, educational courses, and non-real estate, business-related offerings? Should you charge for these offerings or include them in the value package of membership? Continue to discuss these options.

7) SERVICE DELIVERY. How well and how consistently do you deliver your services? What people problems must be addressed? Do you train all of your staff in their overall role and mission, in addition to the mechanics of their job? How do you know your customer service is more than satisfactory, but adds value to the membership? How can you use disservice situations to build member loyalty?

8) FINANCING. What is your financial structure? What are the proportions of revenue, expenses, and net income to your Association? What is the proportion of funds spent on marketing, including conferences, website, communication expenses and advertising/PR. Do you know what you should spend? It is important to consider the budget allocated to marketing efforts in order to measure a return on your marketing investment.

9) DETERMINE YOUR STRATEGY. It's time to put it all together: Identify common issues facing your members. Then ask yourself: How do you best build member loyalty? And get more of your members' attention? Most important, take a serious look at your communications; they are a vital part of your Association strategy.

This is a start for developing your Association marketing strategy. It feels good to be able to check *okay* next to some of these items, but it should also be empowering to prioritize those that need your attention.

**Answer this question:
"Why would I join your
Association
if I didn't have to?"
Your answer should be,
"Because we do "XXXX" better
than anyone else."**

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