

Marketing is everything you do to:

Unify your staff (first) about the reason you exist and the link to your business objectives. For a busy staff, it is necessary to ground your staff about two things: First, think like their members. Don't let them forget they are in existence to help members be more successful. Second, make sure your mission statement is up to date, alive and visible, so it will center your staff on their approach to every interaction with a member.

Understand your customers (this means your members). This involves segmenting and analyzing the many types of members. Segment by age, tenure, generation, culture and anything else that makes each group different.

Plan the services and activities targeted to each segment. More is not better, so validate with your staff, your board and also members this is the tactic that will bridge to your Association's goals.

Look at what sells you when you are not talking one-on-one with a member. Your website, the quality (and quantity) of your written communications, the on-hold messages, the methods you use to communicate will determine how much member attention you will attract. Membership value depends on the ultimate member experience.

Create and deliver a promise to your members. We call this branding. Younger consumers have grown up in a consumer world. They are one segment that wants their brands to stand for something. The fact that you are dependable, care about your members, present a variety of services, or offer a fair price for membership are all expectations. They are not points of differentiation. Challenge your staff and your value proposition by establishing your Association's brand.

Evaluate your services, communications and your brand from both the inside and out. Ask your members if you are answering their needs. Ask them what keeps them up at night. Ask them what will add value to their membership. Analyze and then use the results.

Marketing is a daily activity. You build loyalty when you, the EO call a key Broker to ask for input. You create member value by deciding the lead story for your newsletter. You create a connection with members each time you send them clear, thought-out market statistics. Information they can use when talking to a prospective home buyer or seller. This is especially necessary in today's challenging market.

At the end of the day, like any building project, your marketing plan is a blueprint to reach out to your members. The plan sets your policy around the target audience (**who**), establishes writing principles (**how**), **when** communication will be sent, and **what** will be the lead-in line to grab your members' attention. Ultimately, your work will link back to your annual objectives and provide a laid-out plan to reach them.

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Marketing...what is it? And also when, why, where and how?

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