

Marketing is everything you do to:

Unify with your business partners (members) about the reason you exist. This establishes your link to their business success. For a busy business owner, it is necessary to ground yourself in two areas: First, think like your member. Second, make sure you know the promise you make to your member, and specifically, how you (the CEO), your staff and board will deliver on that promise.

Understand your customers. This involves segmenting and analyzing the many types of members you serve, or will serve. Look at segmentation by age, geographic area, tenure, and anything else that makes each group different. Segmenting your market helps you to get really specific about how you will be relevant to them.

Promote the association to key member segments. Determine the best method to communicate your services and their benefits to each segment. This may help you decide on niche programs and services, to deliver benefits that tie directly to a particular group's success.

Consider 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 all help you deliver your member experience. The quality of your communications will determine how much attention you get from them. Loyalty rests on the quality and consistency of that experience. Remember, people will trust their eyes and ears long before they will ever trust your words.

Create and deliver a promise to your members and prospects.

We call this branding. Young members have grown up in a consumer world. They are one segment that wants the brand to stand for something. The fact that you are dependable, care about members, deliver great services, or offer fair dues, are all expectations. They are not points of differentiation. Challenge yourself and leadership to create your unique brand promise.

Walk the same way you talk. You build loyalty when you, the Executive Officer, call any member to ask for input. You create relevance by deciding the lead story for your newsletter. You create a connection with members each time you send clear, thought-out market statistics and industry updates. Prioritize information members can use to help them better their business.

Evaluate if you are meeting their needs. There is one source that knows better than anyone else what you can do to deliver value: your members. Ask them regularly for feedback and then show them you are listening.

Beginning with your strategic plan, your marketing plan follows as a blueprint for interacting with members. It forces you to think about your target audience (**the who**), establishes **how** you will make the connection, **when** two-way communications will happen, and **what** will be the lead-in line to grab your members' attention. Finally, you will explain the **why** to your members, so they know how the service, the relationship, or decision affects them.

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

Melynn Sight, nSight Marketing
