

yourmembership<sup>®</sup>  
.com

INDUSTRY TRENDS

**PARTICIPATION AS A VITAL LINK  
TO MEMBERSHIP SATISFACTION  
AND RENEWAL**

# Participation as a Vital Link to Membership Satisfaction and Renewal

Written by Dean West, FASAE, Association Laboratory

Associations pursue a broad range of strategies for success. These strategies range from pure product strategies to pure membership strategies and every possible combination in between. All of these options are viable and are dependent on the association's goals, business model and the unique characteristics of their market.

Recent evidence from several client engagements has resulted in Association Laboratory concluding that one key to membership satisfaction and thus propensity for renewal is the ability of the member to participate in the association. Through this participation, they create a bond with the organization that transcends simple features and benefits associated with the tangible products (newsletters, conferences, etc) produced by the association.

Unfortunately, many associations inadvertently limit or create barriers to participation and, as a result, limit their ability to produce the highest levels of membership satisfaction.

## How Members Can Participate

A recent professional organization identified the following potential means of participation for their members.

- Volunteer role as a committee or task force member
- Vote in an election
- Submit an article
- Publish a paper
- Review articles
- Present at a conference
- Present at an educational event
- Attend a chapter meeting
- Speak at a chapter meeting

Channels of participation favored members with the highest education levels active in research. Nearly 50% members indicated they were not active in these ways. Means for new members or for individuals new to the profession or industry were limited. How many of your new or “average” members serve on a committee, speak at your conference or review papers?

## Assessing Barriers

To maximize the success of your membership marketing strategy you must identify these barriers to participation and create strategies to eliminate or reduce these barriers.

- Assess your own organization for barriers to participation. Identify how many different channels a member might touch the association. Do these channels favor particular member groups? For example, if you are a national association that predominantly holds meetings at your national headquarters you create barriers for members unable to take the time or have the money to attend these meetings.
- Identify how these barriers prevent your members from being active in the association. How do these barriers limit participation? Which barriers are most critical to the success of your association? Are their commonalities among these barriers?
- Implement strategies that actively remove or reduce the impact of these barriers. For each problem caused by a specific barrier there are solutions. Implement strategies that are consistent with your existing capabilities. It is easier to expand into things you already know than to create from scratch.

If your association relies on a membership strategy as a fundamental source of success, Association Laboratory has concluded that it is critical that you identify and remove barriers to participation. This allows all members equal access to the intangible benefits of community so important to satisfaction.

INDUSTRY  
TRENDS

# Participation as a Vital Link to Membership Satisfaction and Renewal

Written by Dean West, FASAE, Association Laboratory

---

## About the Author

Association Laboratory is a national consulting firm that specializes in the research and development of marketing and organizational strategy, including professional development, for associations. Dean West, FASAE is Vice Chair of ASAE's Professional Development Council and an association executive with 15 years experience in association management and consulting.

INDUSTRY  
TRENDS