

FOR FSAE
MEMBERS

YOUR MEMBERS EXPECT TO ENGAGE WITH A VOICE



BY DAVE WILL

Whether we provide information to members through mailed publications or emails with links hoping for engagement, there's often no dedicated space for member feedback or opinion in our "communications." Associations do a lot of communicating, but not always a lot of listening.

Social media has trained consumers to expect to be heard. Find a social media influencer you follow, and look at their latest post. It's likely that within 20 minutes they'll have hundreds or thousands of comments.

Here's one from Instagram. @TheEllenShow posted a picture of a baby and a puppy - that's twice as cute as a baby OR a puppy. This post had 3,466 comments at the time that I snapped the screenshot. Do you think Ellen is reading those comments? I'm confident that she's not. But, we have been trained that when something happens in our lives we should be able to comment. We have a voice everywhere. It makes us feel connected to Ellen. Like we have a relationship with her.



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In a world where everyone has a voice, how do you think our members feel if they have nowhere to offer their voice?

Ask your members questions.

Asking members single, thoughtful questions periodically can give them a voice and allow the organization to listen and learn. How is this different than a survey? Asking one or two questions at a time isn't asking members to dive in for 5-10 minutes or more. It's quick, targeted, and can start

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a conversation. You can do this through email, but there are platforms that can help you manage this kind of interaction on a larger scale, like PropFuel, designed specifically for association member engagement.

You may find that you learn a lot from the voice you're hearing.

1. BIG TRENDS: You may learn about global trends your membership is facing. Many people use annual surveys to study their members but struggle with response rates. By occasionally asking one quantitative question with a qualitative follow-up directly in an email, you will learn what they value in membership, what keeps them coming back and how to serve them better.

Here are some questions to ask to identify trends:

- Which of the following is most important to you as a member of XYZ Association? (Multiple choice with open-ended follow-up)

- How well does our association utilize technology to engage and support our members?

- How likely would you be to recommend membership to a friend or colleague?

- For more questions, check out "100 Questions to Ask" <http://bit.ly/propF100>

2. INDIVIDUAL RELATIONS: When we are fortunate enough to connect with members one-on-one, it's usually by happenstance (you bump into them), or you're responding to a complaint, or they don't renew and you're chasing them down. If you're asking questions regularly throughout the year, you will know who to talk to, when to talk to them and what to talk to them about BEFORE they call to complain or even worse, decide to let their membership lapse.

- It's the low-rating scores and open-ended follow-up questions that will help you identify who to reach out to directly.

- Artificial Intelligence or Sentiment Analysis can help filter and narrow down the results by negative and positive language.



3. SOLVE BIG PROBLEMS: Most associations have issues with new member retention, want to improve the onboarding process, renew lapsed members or guide students to become more involved. By asking each of these segments specific questions, you're able to connect with them and hear their voices to serve them better. Without their voice, you don't have a relationship. You have eyeballs, at best.

- Identify the key problems you're addressing in the association and figure out which segments this problem affects.

- Instead of sending targeted content to segments of your audience, send questions that draw them in and get their feedback to help resolve issues.

- Examples include: New Member Retention/On-Boarding, Student Engagement, Lapsed Member Renewals, Learning/Conference Engagement, General Member Retention/Engagement.

The best member-based organizations are asking more questions to give their members a voice. This is the next phase of great member engagement.

While working for SAP, a multi-billion dollar software company, nearly 20 years ago, Dave Will was advised to "walk faster and smile less, because perception is reality". Dave took this feedback to heart and started a business based on the antithesis of this advice. 14 years later, Dave successfully sold Peach New Media, an LMS for associations, which is now part of Community Brands. Since then, Dave and former Peach, Cameron Aubuchon, built a Feedback Automation Platform called PropFuel and they're here again to help associations improve member engagement and build a stronger relationships through conversation marketing.