

# Elevate your association's publications with a member-focused approach: 6 ways to get started

Centering the member experience in your publication can increase engagement and foster a sense of community



## **An association's magazine, journal or newsletter is oftentimes one of the most prominent benefits that members receive.**

Whether it's print or digital, this collection of stories, vital industry news and perspectives on the issues that matter most can engage your members in a unique way. Not only do these publications, especially print, provide a sensory experience that helps the reader better retain information, but they're one of the only places where members can receive topical content that's relevant to their livelihoods. With this in mind, it's only right that the member voice and member experience lie at the crux of your publication strategy.

By ensuring your association's publication is member-centric, you can help cultivate a sense of community and belonging among your membership, promote knowledge sharing and enhance the overall value of your content.

Here are six ways you can make sure your publication is member focused.

A member-centric publication helps cultivate a sense of community and belonging.



# 01. Regularly survey your members about your publication.

One of the best ways to create a member-centric publication is by gathering feedback or insights from your members via a readership survey. Surveys allow you to get firsthand perspectives from your target audience on where you're hitting (or missing) the mark with your content, areas where you can grow your content, as well as information on members' reading habits and awareness of your association's brand. The data you gather from these regular touchpoints can be used to tweak your publication strategy, giving members the information they need in the timing, frequency and format they want.

## Bonus

Capture comments in the open-ended section of the survey that you can use as testimonials in marketing (with permission). Including quotes from members expressing their satisfaction, benefits gained or positive experiences with the association can provide social proof and encourage others to engage with the organization.

# 02. Put your reader's experience first.

If your publications are digital, what features can you add to enhance interactivity? Is the publication easy to navigate and ADA compliant? Are you using design and visuals to add to the reader's experience? Considering how your members use and access your publications will ensure they have the most pleasing experience every time they pick it up or visit your website.

## 03. Update your publication's content to highlight your members.

Within your publications, are there sections or features that put a spotlight on the people your association serves? When a member opens the book or clicks through to an article, can they expect to see a familiar face or name? Think about places where you can feature a member's voice or highlight them within the community. Here are some good places to start.

### Member profiles

Dedicate a section of your publication to spotlight a member. It can be a fun "73 Questions" style Q&A like Vogue does or a more in-depth profile that covers biographical information, accomplishments and success stories, contributions to the industry, lessons learned, and any notable projects or initiatives they've undertaken. An easy way to launch this is by starting with new members or an exceptional volunteer or board member. Highlight their dedication, involvement, and the positive influence they have on the association and its members.

### Member interviews

When crafting content, tap into the unique knowledge base within your membership. Interview members as subject-matter experts before finding an external source to promote knowledge sharing and to amplify the body of knowledge within your organization.

### Chapter highlights

If your association has chapters, find a way to highlight the work they're doing. Perhaps they hosted a successful volunteering event or created a resource that could be shared across the organization. Showcase the impact and value these activities bring to the association's overall community.

### Member milestones and professional updates

This section lets you highlight multiple members and their accomplishments. Ask members to submit any industry awards they've received, promotions or professional achievements, milestone career anniversaries, etc. Write up a blurb about it and include their headshot. This is a good way for members to keep up with what's happening with their colleagues, and it showcases the growth and development of your association's members.

## 04. Ask your members to contribute content.

Member-generated content puts your members' voices at the forefront of your publication, creating a more personal bond between your readers and your organization.

**Put out a call** for contributors via email or social media with information highlighting the opportunities where members can share their insights on the latest industry issues and trends.

**Set up a form** where members can easily submit topics they want to write about.

**Create a one-pager** that outlines the process for contributing, in addition to the types of content (how-to articles, op-eds, case studies, photos and captions, etc.) and the departments that accept member contributions.



Providing members a platform to contribute can boost loyalty and engagement. Download our 2024 Association Engagement Index report, "[Engagement 365: Decoding the Member Journey with the Engagement Loop](#)," to learn how to deepen member involvement.

## 05. Encourage community conversation by marketing the publication.

Oftentimes, after the publication is released, there is minimal promotion around it until the next issue is launched. This presents an opportunity to continue the conversation among your members, with the publication as the focal point. Here are a few ideas to get started:



When sharing member-generated content on social media, tag the author and ask them to repost and share with their networks.



Share the behind-the-scenes of producing an issue, whether it's a fun photo of an editorial board meeting or a poll that lets members pick their favorite cover from your top three cover design mock-ups.



Create a social graphic that thanks all the members who contributed to the latest issue (or within a certain time span) and tag them.



Incorporate the publication into your events. If in print, be sure to have copies to hand out. If you have the capability, set up an area where people can be interviewed for a future issue.

By expanding the conversation around the publication, you're keeping it top of mind until new content is released, while providing an outlet for members to further connect with each other.





## 06. Increase your focus on diversity.

When your members access your publication, they want to see themselves and feel as if they belong. Diversity should be a major component of your publication strategy. When flipping through your magazine or scrolling your online publication or blog, do the visuals and pool of writers show diversity in ethnicity, gender, age, ability, etc.? Are you representing a variety of geographic locations, job titles and levels of experience? Are you representing a viewpoint that derives from inclusion, and not a place of privilege? Consider how you can use your publication to showcase the diversity within your membership in a way that connects with members and the broader professional community your association serves.



Associations will never go wrong by putting their members at the core of their publication's strategy. By creating a member-centric publications program, you help create an environment where your members feel seen, valued and connected to their industry peers.

#### **MORE ON PUBLICATION STRATEGY**

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MCI's U.S. headquarters is in the Washington, D.C., area with offices in New York, Baltimore, Dallas and Chicago.

