

## The Privileges of Membership— Keeping Your Organization Relevant in a Challenging Environment

by Erin Roberts

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*In any economic environment, it's as important to hold on to existing members as it is to attract new members. In both cases you will need your marketing team, but don't make the mistake of using the same message for both groups. Ensure that your existing members are keenly aware of the value of their membership.*

### **Mission-Critical Actions**

1. Is at least some portion of your member services quantifiable? Do your members know it? Members need to be able to justify paying their fees. They must know what they are getting and how much those services are worth. Otherwise they may find another place to spend the money.
2. Are your member services consistent with your organization's value proposition? If so you offer a powerful package to your members. If not, the services could be sourced elsewhere.
3. Is membership in your organization a symbol of professional credibility for your members? If so, membership is a "must-have" rather than a "nice-to have".

### **Ideas to keep relevant on a budget**

Low-cost, high-touch services will keep your membership connected to the organization. Look for ways to engage your members and to expand the organization's role in their lives.

1. Networking events. These are critical when people are feeling vulnerable.
2. Certification programs. Look for ways to provide your members with increased professional credibility at an affordable price.
3. Educational events. Sales and marketing skills are critical in this environment. When corporate budgets are reduced, members are particularly concerned about effectively marketing and selling their services.
4. Peer mentoring groups. These are a powerful way to engage and connect your members.
5. Affiliate privileges. Look at creating alliances with other organizations that will extend the value of your member services.

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