

SUPERCARGE YOUR MEMBERSHIP

7 Gears Associations Need to Drive Growth





INTRODUCTION

It's easy to have the "I wanna go fast!" mentality when it comes to association growth, but long-term, sustainable success isn't about crossing the finish line first. **The key is steady progress.** While 0 to 60 is exhilarating, if you don't shift gears at the right moment, you could easily crash and burn. Just like a skilled driver should have a strong understanding of how their vehicle operates before hitting the track, association leaders must have a strong grasp of who their members are, how to engage them, and what influences their decisions before they can start to move their organization forward.

In this eBook we'll discuss seven "gears" every association needs to drive growth. These tools and strategies will help **steer your organization in the right direction**, allowing you to accelerate growth and have a deeper impact in your industry.



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**LONG-TERM,
SUSTAINABLE
SUCCESS ISN'T
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DATA & ANALYTICS

YOU CAN'T STEER A PARKED CAR

To move your organization forward, you can't stay stagnant. However, many associations struggle with identifying key driving factors and **determining what direction to go**, so they remain at a dead stop. The first step is to get the wheels spinning by shifting into first gear.

Your data serves as the primary starting point because it provides insights into areas that may need improvement. Assessing metrics like membership retention rates, event attendance, and revenue are helpful **indicators of the overall health and performance of your association**. By knowing where your association is at and leveraging data-driven insights, you can make better decisions and set a new course for the future.



60% of marketers
don't trust the overall
health of their data.

(Forbes)

DON'T FORGET TO CHECK THE OIL

Having accurate and up-to-date data is vital for a smooth start. It's important to regularly audit your information. Since **member information can change from year to year**, make sure names, contact information, job titles, relevant certifications, educational backgrounds, and any other pertinent demographic information is accurate.

Outdated (or missing information) creates an inaccurate picture of your membership demographics. It can be time-consuming and expensive to clean up stale data. Just like a car needs to be driven regularly and taken in for maintenance, your data needs **consistent upkeep and cleaning**.



Create a plan to clean up your membership data and **establish guidelines** for keeping it up to date moving forward. The last thing you want is to have your marketing efforts be in vain when you send an email to a former member who's no longer active, or a postcard to someone who moved out of state.

Your data serves as the **primary starting point**.





WEBSITE & PUBLICATIONS

LICENSE AND REGISTRATION PLEASE

In today's digital age, not having a corporate website is like being pulled over without a driver's license, or worse, getting caught with a fake ID. People come to your website not only to learn about your association but to **validate your organization** as legitimate. They pay attention to the information you provide, how up to date it is, and whether your association is a reliable resource. Since your website acts as your primary form of identification, make sure you put on your best look and smile for the camera!

To ensure your association website is bonified, these are some key elements website visitors will be looking for:

- Mission statement
- Contact information
- Directory of board members and staff
- Industry news and relevant resources
- Calendar of events with upcoming conferences, webinars, and activities
- Membership-related information such as benefits, fees and renewals



**YOUR WEBSITE
ACTS AS YOUR
PRIMARY FORM
OF IDENTIFICATION.**



It takes about 50 milliseconds (that's 0.05 seconds) for users **to form an opinion about your website.**
([Taylor & Francis Online](#))

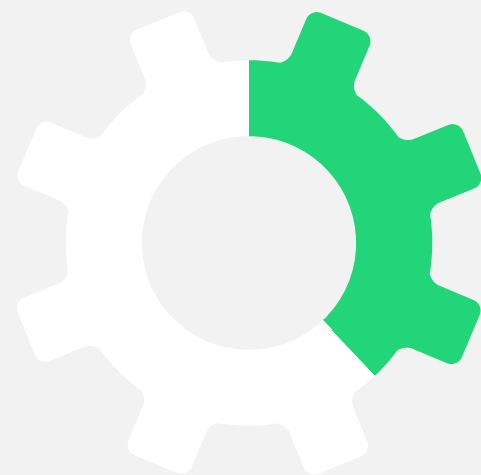


A **user-friendly and engaging website** is crucial for making a positive first impression and retaining visitors.

In addition, prioritize functionality with clear page labels to navigate throughout the entire website as well as easy access to desired content. Visitors shouldn't have to jump through hoops to get what they want.

A user-friendly and engaging website is crucial for making a positive first impression and retaining visitors. By investing in your website's usability and content, you create an online experience that both **informs and captivates your audience** while building trust and credibility for your association.

To optimize your website, **leverage SEO** to ensure potential members can find your association as they search online. Additionally, your organization can perform a **UX analysis** to understand how visitors engage with your website and where they spend the most time. Regularly tracking your website analytics provides valuable insights to help you make adjustments that will continue to **enhance the user experience**.



38% of people will stop engaging with a website if the content or layout are unattractive.
[\(HubSpot\)](#)



EMAIL MARKETING

CHECK OUT MY WHEELS

There are many ways to customize a vehicle, but vanity plates have become an extremely popular way for drivers to express their unique personality. These plates often feature clever wordplay, inside jokes, or meaningful symbols that reflect the owner's individuality. Whether you understand the scrambled letters on the back of someone's car or not, the underlying message is **people like personalization**.

This is why email marketing is the most common strategy used by associations. It's a direct way to create a **customized experience**. You can tailor the message to the individual using their name, place of work, or even their specific interests. Then by layering in behavioral and intent data such as actions taken on your website or event attendance, you can build a highly targeted, personal email.

For fully loaded, effective email campaigns that resonate with your audience and drive engagement, be sure to implement these strategies:

- **Segmentation:** Split audiences into separate groups based on interests and engagement. This allows you to send more relevant content, increasing the chances of conversion.
- **Automation:** Use email automation tools to schedule and send emails based on specific triggers, such as signing up for a newsletter or making a purchase. This ensures timely communication.
- **Copywriting:** Use compelling subject lines to capture the attention of email recipients. The subject line is the first thing recipients see, so make it intriguing enough to open the email.
- **A/B Testing:** Try various layouts and messages to see what resonates best with your audience. By testing different elements, you can increase performance and engagement rates.
- **Mobile Responsive:** Ensure all emails are mobile-friendly. This improves user experience, increasing the likelihood of recipients reading and acting on your emails.
- **Timing:** Keep in mind where people live and coordinate emails accordingly. Consider the time zones and daily routines of your audience to determine the best times to send your emails.

SOCIAL NETWORKS ARE A NATURAL SETTING FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE THEIR PERSONAL INTERESTS.



SOCIAL MEDIA



TAKE THE SCENIC ROUTE

It's easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of marketing, but sometimes you want to go at a more leisurely pace. Social media is the perfect detour for associations wanting to explore new aspects of their audiences and take a more approachable avenue.

Because social networks and platforms are a natural setting for people to share their personal interests and experiences, associations can learn about their members to **build even deeper relationships**. These are opportunities for your organization to engage, whether it's by leaving a comment, sharing, or simply liking the post. Additionally, you can take advantage of **content created by followers**, known as user-generated content (UGC), to better promote your association authentically.

Another route associations could go down is to develop **online groups and communities** where members and industry professionals can come together to ask questions, network, and interact with peers. Whether it's leaving a comment to congratulate a peer on their recent promotion, sharing a recent article from a board member, or simply liking a picture or video; these are opportunities for your organization to engage.



The amount of time internet users spend on social media is now **higher than ever — 151 minutes per day.**

[\(Statista\)](#)



CONTENT MARKETING & THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

PUT YOURSELF IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Remember the first time getting behind the steering wheel? It was intimidating but also exhilarating. With the keys to the car, you had the freedom to go anywhere.

Content marketing and thought leadership offer a similar experience. By producing high-quality content consistently, you **position your association as the authority** in your industry. Instead of taking the backseat, you steer the conversation and set the direction for industry standards where both members and potential members look to you as a **trusted resource**.

By diversifying your content strategy and providing helpful, engaging materials, you not only make it an **enjoyable experience for members** and increase their satisfaction but keep your association at the forefront of your industry.



Two-thirds of marketers (66%) **consider thought leadership a “top priority”** for their organization.
([Survey Monkey](#))



BLOGS:

Write insightful articles that address common challenges and provide solutions relevant to your industry.



VIDEOS:

Create engaging video content, such as interviews with industry experts, instructional videos, or event highlights, to capture your audience's attention.



INFOGRAPHICS:

Design visually appealing infographics that simplify complex information and make it easily digestible.



SOCIAL MEDIA:

Share updates, industry news, and engaging posts on platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook to reach a broader audience.



WEBINARS:

Host live or recorded webinars to provide in-depth knowledge on specific topics, allowing members to interact and ask questions.



NEWSLETTERS:

Distribute regular newsletters with curated content, important announcements, and upcoming events to keep members informed and engaged.



REPORTS:

Publish detailed reports on industry trends, research findings, and market analysis to establish your association as a thought leader.



WHITEPAPERS:

Develop comprehensive whitepapers that delve into critical issues, offering in-depth insights and practical solutions.



TESTIMONIALS:

Showcase success stories and positive feedback from members to build credibility and attract new prospects.



EDUCATIONAL COURSES:

Offer online courses and training programs to help members enhance their skills and knowledge, adding value to their membership.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH & EVENTS

GET YOUR KICKS ON ROUTE 66

Just as the historic U.S. Highway 66 connected two-thirds of the United States, your association **brings your industry together** through meetings, events, and outreach programs. Whether in-person or virtual, these gatherings create a space for members to network, share ideas, and be part of a community.

Though unified by a common mission, your members are all unique and have individual interests and needs. When planning an event, make sure you **cater to the various ages, career levels, and nationalities of attendees** with specific topics, programs, and educational sessions. Diversity adds richness to your organization, fueling inspiration and innovation.

At the end of the day, no one wants to travel alone. The more opportunities you provide to foster connection and allow people to feel part of something larger than themselves will lead to greater **satisfaction and member retention**.

ENSURE THAT YOUR
MEMBERS FEEL PART
OF SOMETHING
LARGER THAN
THEMSELVES.



FEEDBACK

CHECK YOUR MIRRORS

It's been said that the windshield is bigger than the rearview mirror for a reason – where you're going is more important than where you've been. While being future-focused is necessary, ignoring the past is foolish. To avoid heading down a collision course, associations should regularly check the review mirror and ask their members and other stakeholders for feedback.

Strategies for collecting feedback:

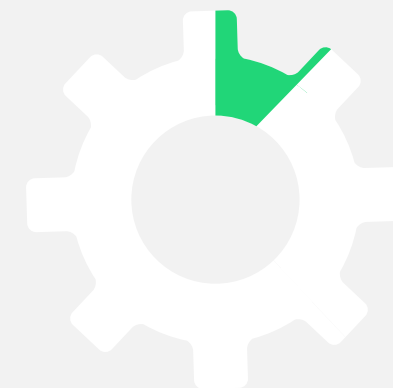
- **Email Outreach:** Directly reach out to your members via personalized emails, requesting their feedback on specific areas of your association's services and initiatives. This approach allows for targeted questions and can result in more detailed responses.
- **Feedback Forms on Website:** Implement easy-to-find and user-friendly feedback forms on your association's website. These forms can be designed to gather input on various aspects such as event experiences, membership benefits, and overall satisfaction.
- **Phone Calls:** Conduct one-on-one phone calls with select members to gather in-depth feedback. This personal approach not only makes members feel valued but also provides an opportunity for more nuanced conversations.
- **Event Surveys:** Distribute surveys at the end of events to capture immediate feedback from attendees. This can include both physical events and virtual webinars, ensuring you understand the attendees' experiences and areas for improvement.
- **Live Chat Features:** Incorporate live chat features on your website to provide real-time support and gather instant feedback. This tool can be especially useful for addressing immediate concerns and understanding common queries or issues faced by members.



Make it a point to **listen, respond, and act** on their input.

As you collect feedback, make it a point to listen, respond, and act on their input. Whether it's positive or negative, being open to critiques and constructive criticism shows that you **value your members and want to serve them better**. In the long run, you'll have more awareness to blind spots so you can avoid potential fender benders as well as make necessary adjustments to your processes and strategies along the way.

Remember, the road to **success is always a work in progress**, and feedback is your GPS towards continuous improvement. By looking back in the review mirror while keeping your eyes on the road ahead, you can ensure a safe and enjoyable journey for everyone.



Companies that **regularly act** on feedback have **8.5% higher customer retention rates**.

([CustomerGauge](#))



HIT THE ROAD

Driving growth for your association requires patience, finesse, and continuous fine-tuning. By being properly equipped and learning how to strategically shift gears, your association can smoothly navigate the road to sustainable success. Just remember, success is not a destination; it's a journey. So buckle up and enjoy the ride!

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