



June 2025

Voice of the Member Survey

What young professionals want, need and expect from associations

Introduction

A generational milestone is underway: the largest graduating class in history is about to enter a workforce—that for the first time—spans five generations: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z. As the workforce transforms at breakneck speed, so does the marketing playbook on how to effectively engage, attract, and retain current and future members.

It is our belief that associations have an incredible opportunity to engage meaningfully with the next generation of members by first understanding what their wants, needs and expectations are. To accelerate this understanding, we commissioned a nationwide survey of young professionals. What we found is that there's demand in what associations can offer, but there is also a disconnect. Specifically, we uncovered three themes:

The awareness-value gap

84% of young professionals are aware of associations, but only 25% truly understand the value that they bring to their career development. Young professionals are aware of associations and their intended mission and purpose, but they don't understand how that translates into tangible benefits that directly impact their career. This value gap significantly influences their membership decisions.

Digital fluency as your differentiator

Instagram is now the platform of choice for young professionals seeking career content. An edutainment-style approach—content that educates while entertains—is in demand, signaling a growing appreciation for authentic storytelling and relatable creator content.

Revival of IRL

Digital-only engagement isn't enough. Young professionals are hungry for real-life connections, mentorship, and community. With both remote work and relocation on the rise in recent years, physical distance can create mental distance—causing less connection to mission and purpose.

Along with a deeper dive into each of these key themes, we've offered a simple marketing framework to help you effectively engage, attract, and retain current and future members. Leveraging over 25 years of leadership in the association industry, Multiview is at your disposal to help you apply these findings. We encourage you to get in touch with our dedicated Associations Partnerships & Marketing Team to help shape your future marketing and membership strategy.



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Methodology

Conducted by Multiview in partnership with the University of Southern California:

- Quantitative survey (n = 472) of students and recent graduates, aged 20–30
- 20 in-depth interviews across undergrads, grad students, and recent grads

Participants were recruited from academic programs and recent alumni lists to ensure a range of perspectives from those currently entering the workforce. Of the total respondents, 58% were aged 20–25 and 43% were aged 26–30. The survey was designed to surface attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors around professional associations, while interviews offered qualitative depth and personal context to the trends identified in the data. This mixed-methods approach uncovered both broad trends and rich qualitative insights.

Survey Respondents Demographics



20-25 years old 26-30 years old



The awareness-value gap

Young professionals know associations exist, but many don't see how membership connects to their career goals. They're unclear on what associations offer, how to access those benefits, or why it's worth their limited time and money. That disconnect creates hesitation and leaves a wide-open lane for associations to capture interest with the right message.

What the data says

- 84% of young professionals are aware of associations, but only 25% think associations are significant to their career development.
- Most discovery happens passively: via social media (73%), university career services (66%), and employers (65%).
- Nearly half of young professionals say they wish they were more aware of relevant associations.

Why this matters

Young professionals want professional development, but they don't understand how an association membership can help them achieve this. They also feel underserved from their academic institutions and employers. This is a huge opportunity. Associations have a rare chance to claim unoccupied ground and spark fresh demand because young professionals aren't hearing from many others. This isn't a crowded race—it's an open invitation.



Here's the key: When benefits feel vague, interest drops. When the value is made tangible, young professionals are ready to lean in. Associations must bridge this gap between known and understood by communicating offerings in clear, outcome-oriented terms.

So, what do young professionals value:

They are looking for tangible help with their careers. They don't want vague messaging. They want results, specifically; job placement assistance, career coaching and mentorship, and resume and interview preparation. And when asked what would make them see the value in joining an association, the number one answer was clear: show outcomes.

Bridge the gap: To close the gap between awareness and value, go straight to the priorities that matter; career growth, skill-building, and real-world support. Instead of broad messaging, spotlight the payoffs; getting hired, gaining skills, feeling supported. Bring the impact to life. Use short-form videos of member wins, quick testimonials, or snapshots of career progress. Think job offers, promotions, or skill certifications.

You're not just telling them what you offer—you're proving it. And the good news? Associations already have what young professionals need. Now it's just a matter of packaging it in ways that cut through the noise.

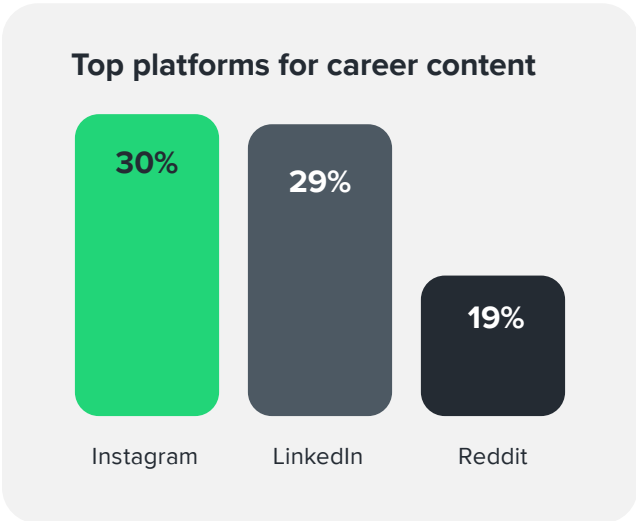
Lifecycle of the member

When reaching prospective members—especially those early in their careers—associations must ground their messaging in the reality young professionals are navigating: uncertainty, ambition, and a desire for stability. Associations that lead with clear, immediate value, like mentorship, skills training, and job placement, stand a far better chance of earning attention and trust. But that's just the beginning. As members grow and evolve, their motivations shift. This is where associations have the chance to reintroduce the full breadth of their value: advocacy, leadership, and industry-shaping influence. By doing so, you transform initial engagement into enduring membership, positioning your association as essential partners throughout a member's entire professional lifecycle.

Digital fluency as your differentiator

Young professionals are heavy users of social media and want associations to show up more on those platforms. In fact, when asked how they'd prefer to learn about associations that are right for them, the number one response was social media. Young professionals' attention is focused on a select set of digital channels and they expect organizations to not just show up, but to participate in ways aligned with their needs.

When asked what type of content would make them see the value in associations, the top response was proof of effectiveness and communicating the benefits and impact of joining. Career insights, peer voices, and transparent value are what earn attention.



Why this matters

Associations have great resources—but if they're not showing up on the platforms young professionals already use, they risk going unseen. Content must be fast, authentic, and native to where young professionals already spend their time.

LinkedIn: A clear frontrunner for career-focused content, but industry adoption varies. 2025 LinkedIn demographics show that not all sectors are equally active, so it's worth tailoring your strategy accordingly.

Platform tip: LinkedIn's algorithm prioritizes content that sparks meaningful engagement—not just likes, but comments and shares within the first few hours. Posts that lead with a bold statement or personal insight followed by value-based advice tend to perform well. Native content (written directly in-platform) outperforms

external links. To maximize reach, encourage member conversations in the comments and post consistently during peak engagement windows (Tuesday – Thursday mornings).

Instagram: Remains a top platform for younger professionals. It demands a visual-first, edutainment-style approach—content that educates while entertaining. Think quick career tips in carousel form, short reels that spotlight member journeys, or infographic explainers that simplify complex industry trends. It's less about polish, more about personality and resonance.

Platform tip: Instagram favors consistent posting, saves, shares, and engagement through Stories and DMs. Post steadily (3–5 times/week) and use Insights to track what works. The algorithm prefers content that keeps users on the app—carousels and Reels outperform static posts. Use trending audio, captions, and strong hooks in the first 3 seconds. Edutainment should be concise, high-energy, and instantly clear about the takeaway.

Reddit: Though unexpected, Reddit provides a space for anonymous discussion, peer advice, and community sentiment. It's less about visibility and more about listening—and learning. Associations can monitor relevant subreddits to understand the real conversations happening around their industries, the concerns and frustrations young professionals express, and the gaps they're experiencing in support or knowledge. It's an opportunity to gather language, pain points, and ideas that can inform content strategy and tone elsewhere.

Want to build deeper credibility?

Let members do the talking. Invite them to co-create short-form content that highlights what they've gained—while helping them build their own professional voice. That's a win-win. Embrace story-driven content that reflects members' experiences and humanizes the brand.

Why this works: When asked what type of content would make them see the value in associations, young professionals overwhelmingly pointed to proof of impact and clear communication of benefits. Testimonials and co-created content don't just tell—they show the real payoff of membership.

Revival of IRL

In a world shaped by constant digital connection, young professionals are seeking genuine, in-person community. Online spaces offer convenience, but they fall short when it comes to belonging and relationship-building. This presents a major opportunity for associations to stand out by offering what social platforms and virtual networks can't: real human connection..

Why this matters

In-person engagement is a timely and strategic channel to meet young professionals' desire for connection, mentorship, and peer support. Associations are uniquely positioned to create intentional, structured environments for connection—something schools and workplaces don't always offer.

What they want (and don't): Many young professionals also expressed a need for more casual or intimate networking opportunities with peers their age, in addition to potential mentors. For those in remote jobs or online academic programs, in-person events become even more valuable for making connections. Several participants expressed the downfalls of large events—describing them as overwhelming, impersonal, and ineffective for making meaningful connections. Students noted that they often had to compete for attention rather than forming real relationships, while recent graduates emphasized their preference for smaller, more casual gatherings where they could connect naturally with peers. These intimate formats were seen as more approachable and conducive to building rapport, rather than navigating a crowded room full of strangers.

“

Industry-specific events would be helpful to meet professionals in smaller groups instead of huge networking nights where you don't actually talk to anyone for long.

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How to apply this:

Create personal, useful, and welcoming experiences for early-career pros. Find fresh, flexible ways to bring people together—like skill pop-ups, mentorship cafés, or local meetups. Use creative formats to ease nerves and spark real connections. The aim? Everyone leaves with a new insight, a new contact—or both.

- Small-group career talks with seasoned professionals
- Peer-led panels with recent graduates or early-career members
- Low-stakes social events to foster casual connection
- Skill workshops hosted by associations but led by employer partners

Want to expand reach? Team up with universities and employers to host co-branded experiences that feel tailored and purposeful. Consider working with schools to co-sponsor career panels, industry-specific mixers, or job fairs—formats that not only draw in students already thinking about their futures but also give associations a chance to meet them where they are. Campus-hosted events offer convenience and lower the barriers to engagement.

For annual conferences and large events, consider working with local schools to recruit student volunteers. This not only supports operational needs but also creates a powerful give-back opportunity. Students can gain firsthand exposure to the association, network with professionals in the field, sit in on educational sessions, and explore the exhibitor floor—all of which provide meaningful insight into the industry and the association's role within it. With minimal added cost, associations can build relationships with local institutions, offer valuable experience to students, and spark early interest in membership by welcoming future professionals into the fold.

Take it further: Partner with employers to host member-led talks, career workshops, or networking events onsite. These approachable, local gatherings help young professionals build real connections. Small, repeatable formats position associations as consistent, trusted connectors where members already work and grow.

Insights turned into an actionable framework

Associations are in a great position to lead the moment. You already offer mentorship, growth opportunities, and industry access—assets that young professionals want and need. With intentional strategy and refreshed messaging, associations have tremendous untapped potential to become the go-to source for early-career connection and development. To get you started, we've provided you with a simple marketing framework below. The 6M Framework is a simple and modern way to think about how your total marketing ecosystem should be in service of your mission.



The 6M Framework

The Mission

Your mission statement clarifies what your organization does and why it exists.

Members

Create a clear segmentation of who your current and future membership represents. Consider surveying their expected value (new members) and experienced value (existing members)

Segment 01

Expected Value

Experienced Value

Segment 02

Expected Value

Experienced Value

Segment 03

Expected Value

Experienced Value

Segment 04

Expected Value

Experienced Value

Message

Based on member value survey, create benefit-driven and outcome-driven message points for each segment. Apply this messaging to all relevant channels.

- Benefit 1
- Benefit 2
- Benefit 3

- Benefit 1
- Benefit 2
- Benefit 3

- Benefit 1
- Benefit 2
- Benefit 3

- Benefit 1
- Benefit 2
- Benefit 3

Identify the content pillars and subtopics that matter most to your segments. Start small with one content pillar for each segment.

Media

Identify the channels, partners and experiences by which you intend to reach your member segments.

Monetization

Layer your monetization strategy to drive new revenue streams.

Measurement

Define success indicators. How will you measure success?

About Multiview

Multiview is a leading B2B digital marketing agency that helps associations and businesses reach, engage and grow their most valued relationships. We uniquely combine B2B media expertise with first-party audience data to help clients and partners maximize their brand reach and revenue potential.

We're proud to work with 850+ purpose-driven associations who are committed to creating awareness and advocacy for a better future, including the National Association of Elementary School Principals, American Fire Sprinkler Association, and National Grocers Association. We're equally proud to shape the B2B future with global enterprises, including Abbott, Burns & McDonnell and Huggies Healthcare among others.

Multiview is a Stagwell portfolio company. To stay on top of the latest news and announcements from Multiview, follow us on LinkedIn.

Visit our website: www.multiview.com

Thanks to our valued partners

This August, Multiview celebrates 25 years of impact in the association space. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our association partners, some of whom are listed below. It's been an honor to have had a front row seat watching and partnering with you to advance your mission. This research is dedicated to all of you and the next generation of association leaders that are committed to building purposeful organizations that leave a lasting and positive legacy.

