



10 Reasons Why Members Renew

It's easy for you to think, "We have so much to offer—why wouldn't a member renew?" We always think we're great and that our members value and appreciate all we offer. After all, we advocate countless hours on their behalf while they're running their businesses and we work endlessly to provide a zillion programs every month, right? When you consider everything we do, our members are just paying a fraction of what it really costs for us to accomplish so much!

Just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, membership value is not determined by us but by our members. What value would they say they receive and why do they renew their membership each year? If you don't ask why they renew, maybe you should. Sometimes the answers you receive are vague, like "networking" which doesn't necessarily tell you what they specifically get. After years of designing member feedback tools like surveys, focus groups and interviews I can categorize renewal reasons into 10 'buckets.' Members renew their investment in our organizations for:

Civic Responsibility—Yes, just like chivalry still exists and men open doors for women and walk on the outside of the pavement, there are still entities who support the "fair share" concept and feel it's their civic duty to be a member. Whether they attend events or take advantage of what we offer, they continue to be "good civic citizens" and renew each year. Wish we had more of them!

Sense of Community—We do develop a rich and supportive community and these members enjoy and reap the benefits of being part of this community. There is a sense of inclusion that offers collaboration, support, and like-minded values and members feel a strong bond to other members. They are like Muskateers and believe in the "one for all" and "all for one" virtues.

Affiliation and Credibility—Members see us as the sphere of influence and feel that by being affiliated with us it gives them a strategic partnership and the "Good Housekeeping seal of approval." They want to leverage their membership to promote their brand, be included on invitations and opportunities, and to increase their image in the community.

Bridges and Connections—Members aren't really seeking 'networking' as much as they want to gain access to those who can help them achieve their goals. They benefit from the "6 degrees of separation" and can be connected with mentors, vendors, prospective customers, and key stakeholders they might not otherwise meet or interact with in their own circles. We are the "LinkedIn" both virtually and in-person and help members build "social capital" in the area.

Common Vision—Members love leaders who have a great vision, purpose and significant goals. They believe in our strategic direction and initiatives, and want to do whatever they can to ensure that we are successful. It's not for altruistic reasons to be members since they believe that by ensuring our success they ensure their own. Members want to be part of the "big picture" and invest in resources for long term sustainability.

Visibility—Members know that in this marketplace, it's important to have consistent visibility. Visibility promotes their brands, let's people know they're still around, and keeps them "top of mind" with those they want to influence. In a world where people are bombarded with marketing, opinions and junk mail,

it's easy to be forgotten or passed by. Members have hundreds of opportunities to be visible and be seen by a fast-paced, instant gratification environment.

Representation—Members acknowledge that their voices can't always be heard above all the noise in decision-making circles and media venues. Partly it's due to small businesses being perceived as “small fish” or a fraction of constituents by decision makers, but it's also due to a lack of understanding how these systems work, accessibility to specific decision makers, lack of credibility or perceived power, or just because most members are busy running their own operations. We have the contacts, skills, and clout to represent members' concerns that allows them to focus on their strengths and achieve their goals. We're there so our members don't need to be.

Just-in-Time-Solutions—Members count on us and our community for educational opportunities, problem-solving and access to best practices. Since most of our members are small, they appreciate that “we have people” who can offer wisdom, know-how, and help us over the constant hurdles of running a profitable small business. We're like a huge Wikipedia of resources and boy, wouldn't it be great if we had a virtual one to help members find what they need?

Cost-and-Time-Effective Benefits—Members are always trying to find ways to save money and time on operational needs. Whether it's savings for buying office supplies, insurance, shipping, utilities, advertising or job postings, they know they can save money and time by accessing these benefits through our affinity programs. We've already compared the vendors, done the negotiating, and set up the system to plug-and-use. Where else can you go to access so much in one place? We're a one-stop shop for all of these benefits and members only need to pay one membership fee to play!

Leads Generation—Members expect that we'll refer others to them and help promote their businesses. Although we can't guarantee leads or higher conversion rates, we do provide countless opportunities for members to generate leads. From directory listings, sponsorships, leads groups, and networking and volunteer opportunities, we provide face-to-face and virtual interactions with hundreds or even thousands of people every year. If prospects and customers are like cars, we give members access to the busiest highways and parking lots in the area!

All of these reasons for renewal help to create loyal members and build a sustainable organization for the community. Provide members with opportunities to share why they joined and renewed, and allow them to communicate using their own language. Sometimes they say it so much better than we ever could.

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