



How to Keep Members Engaged

Modern engagement tactics for associations and chambers

Customer Training · GrowthZone



Engagement Is the #1 Challenge

Chambers and associations tell us the same thing, year after year.

Keeping members engaged is the hardest — and most important — job you have. It shows up at the top of every list of challenges chamber professionals report.

#1

Ranked the top internal challenge: member engagement & retention

77%

have no written plan for increasing member engagement

63%

say member engagement improved over the past year

Source: GrowthZone 2026 Annual Chamber Survey (498 chamber professionals, U.S. & Canada).

Three Stressors

If your organization is struggling with member engagement, you're not alone.

NO TIME

Everyone is pressed for time.

From back-to-back online meetings to longer working hours, time is at a premium — for your members and your staff alike.

LESS PARTICIPATION

Younger members participate less in onsite events.

These digital natives are more inclined to take part in online groups, chats, and forums than to show up in person.

MORE COMPETITION

More groups and clubs are competing for attention.

Your members have more places than ever to spend their limited time and dollars.

The Data Backs This Up

The same three pressures show up plainly in the survey results.

- 1 Time.** “Time, never enough time” ranks as the #2 internal challenge, and “lack of time to participate” is the #1 reason members give for not renewing.
- 2 Participation.** Member engagement and retention is the #1 internal challenge; “lack of engagement” is the #2 non-renewal reason; and attracting younger members is a recurring struggle.
- 3 Competition.** “Competing with another local membership-based organization” and “competition for attention” both rank among the pressures chambers expect over the next 12 months.



Source: GrowthZone 2026 Annual Chamber Survey.

The World Has Changed. Have You?

There's no reason to keep playing by 20th-century rules.

Your members no longer need to show up to every event to be engaged.

Face-to-face meetings still have great value — but they are no longer the only way to build commitment and a sense of belonging.

This session highlights the trends and tactics associations and chambers should be using to drive participation and engagement today.



Source: GrowthZone 2026 Annual Chamber Survey.

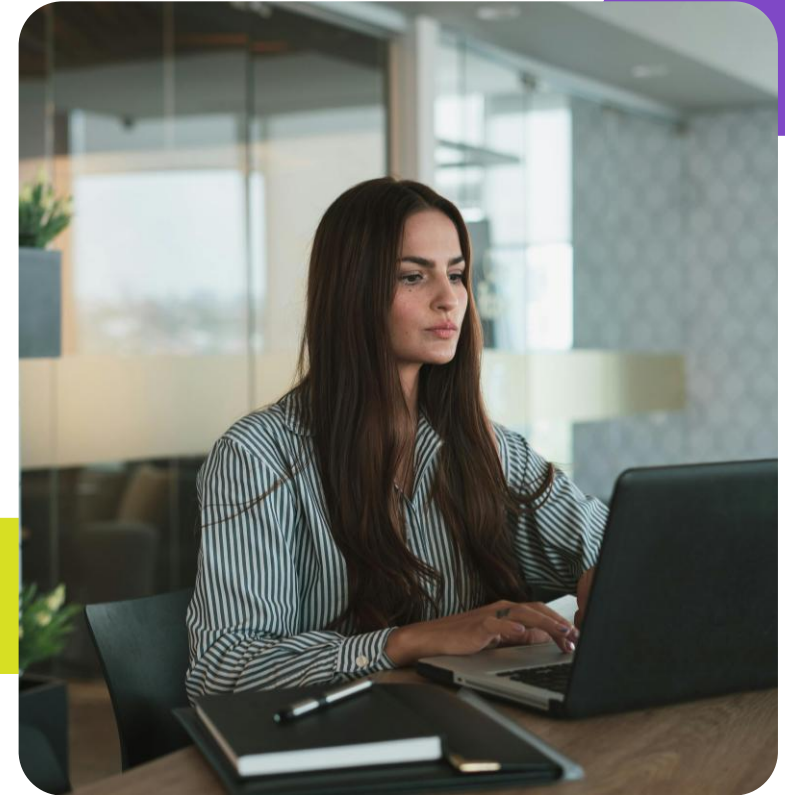
63%

of chambers say member engagement got better over the past year — the momentum is real

Five Tactics to Drive Engagement

Membership-based organizations of any size should embrace online engagement.

- 1 Build awareness through social media
- 2 Build trust through content marketing
- 3 Use storytelling to drive digital engagement
- 4 Build a following through thought leadership
- 5 Capture prospects' attention with inbound marketing



TACTIC 1

Build Awareness Through Social Media

Don't overlook social media — one of the greatest distribution channels ever built.



Word of Mouth Becomes World of Mouth

Social media has changed how people find products, services, and organizations.

People trust each other far more than they trust advertising.

Erik Qualman — author of Socialnomics — puts it simply: word of mouth has become world of mouth. Social media amplifies every recommendation.

His forecast: **“We will no longer search for products and services — they will find us via social media.”**

78%

trust peer recommendations

14%

trust advertisements



Source: Erik Qualman, Socialnomics (equalman.com).

Think Bigger, Be the Authority

THINK BIGGER

Social media is an open forum to your entire community — not just members.

If your page becomes a regular source of information and thoughtful discussion, you'll draw a much larger audience and more awareness.

BE THE AUTHORITY

When prospects see you as the trusted authority, they follow and share.

You engage people where they already gather, rather than requiring them to come to you — that's how trusted information earns a following.

CAST A WIDER NET

Social media is now critical to how people find products and services — and its impact will only grow.

Ignore this channel and you do so at your own peril.



Ideas You Can Use This Week

Concrete ways to build awareness and start conversations.

- 1 Post about the local businesses people mention when they visit — instead of the same old spotlights.
- 2 Listen on social, and reshare members' news, discounts, and events.
- 3 Run a #ThrowbackThursday with historic photos of your community and past members.
- 4 Crowdsource community photos on a weekly theme and turn the best into a calendar.
- 5 Go live: interview a member on Facebook Live, and share short, human video.



Ideas from: 40 Member Engagement Ideas You Probably Haven't Tried Before (chamber-pros-community.com).

Communities Keep People Coming Back

GETTING STARTED

Four moves to make first:

- 1 Pick one platform your members actually use.
- 2 Post consistently — a simple content calendar beats sporadic bursts.
- 3 Reshare member content so members see themselves in your feed.
- 4 Track what earns engagement, and do more of it.



Proof point: Chamber Pros Community Facebook group & newsletter (chamber-pros-community.com).

12.5K

members in the largest online network for chamber professionals

TACTIC 2

Build Trust Through Content Marketing

Compelling content online increases the odds that prospects find you.



Be Findable

Content marketing is the creation and distribution of informative content online.

THE CONCEPT

Not everyone you serve has visited your website — but most have gone online to look for information you likely have.

Want information on a new flat-screen TV? You Google it. When prospective members want information on the services you offer, they do exactly the same thing.

Publish compelling content, index it with the right keywords, and you increase the likelihood they find you.

THE PAYOFF

It maps to why members join:

- 1 To grow their network.
- 2 To build credibility in their community or profession.
- 3 To find resources and answers they can't easily get elsewhere.



"Why do members join?" — GrowthZone 2026 Annual Chamber Survey.

Many Ways to Tell Your Story

Don't stop at your website. The more places your content lives, the better.

Blog Posts

Short, searchable answers to the questions prospects ask most.

Newsletters

A regular touchpoint that keeps members informed and engaged.

Videos

Human, sharable, and easy to consume on any device.

White Papers & Reports

Depth that positions you as a credible source.

Guides & Checklists

Practical tools members save, use, and share.

Brochures

Clear overviews of what membership delivers.

Content That Builds Trust

Turn what you know into content members value.

- 1 Send members a personalized year-end recap of how they used their membership — and what to try next.
- 2 Before each renewal, show members what you've done for them: referrals sent, questions answered, events attended.
- 3 Publish practical explainers — a “Finance 101 for non-finance leaders,” for example.
- 4 Turn member questions into content: answer the five things prospects ask you most.



Ideas from: 40 Member Engagement Ideas & 7 Keys to Member Retention (chamber-pros-community.com).

Content Can Pay for Itself

The same content that builds trust can also generate non-dues revenue.

NEWSLETTER SPOTS & ADVERTORIALS

Let a member appear as a featured business with a by-line — keep the salesy tone low.

WEBSITE BANNERS & ADS

Sell placement across your digital channels.

EXPOSURE PACKAGES

Bundle listings across emails, letters, and your website.



Ideas: 50 Non-Dues Revenue Ideas (chamber-pros-community.com). Stat: GrowthZone 2026 Chamber Survey.

54%

of chambers earn 40–69% of total revenue from non-dues sources

TACTIC 3

Use Storytelling to Drive Digital Engagement

Your members joined for a reason. Let them do the talking.



The Member Success Story

Start with a member success story. The storyline usually goes like this:

- 1 Outline the challenge.** Describe a member's pain point or something they struggled with.
- 2 Describe the solution.** Show what they found — the benefits they received from joining your organization.
- 3 Highlight the outcome.** Share the positive results that followed.



Why it lands

Prospective members with similar challenges would love to learn how your members solved them — in the members' own words.

People Trust People

Consumers trust the recommendations of peers and professional groups more than companies.

Social proof is the most persuasive content you have.

A widely cited BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey found that 79% of online shoppers trust online reviews, and more than 70% say positive reviews influence where they buy.

It echoes what we saw earlier: 78% trust peer recommendations, versus just 14% for advertising.

79%

trust online reviews

70%+

say reviews sway where they
buy



Sources: BrightLocal, cited in GrowthZone Member Engagement guide; Erik Qualman, Socialnomics.

Make Storytelling a Habit

Let members share in their own words — then amplify it.

- 1 Celebrate your people: share graduates, promotions, and newcomers.
- 2 Recognize members doing something innovative, and feature them.
- 3 Record short member spotlights — video or Facebook Live.
- 4 Model a small-business awards program on the U.S. Chamber's CO-100 to spotlight member success.



Ideas: 40 Member Engagement Ideas (chamber-pros-community.com); U.S. Chamber CO-100 (uschamber.com).

TACTIC 4

Build a Following Through Thought Leadership

Position your organization as a voice of knowledge and expertise.



Become the Authority

Your organization has information and offers services — that makes you an expert.

People want to hear from authorities.

So position your knowledge in a way that makes your organization the go-to expert. Most chambers want to be seen as a problem-solver that helps businesses and the community thrive — not just a “chamber of events.”

Thought leadership is how you claim that role. As Erik Qualman reminds us: digital leaders aren't digital — leadership comes first.



Sources: GrowthZone 2026 Chamber Survey; Erik Qualman, *Digital Leader* (equalman.com).

64%

of chambers want to be seen as a problem-solver, not just a chamber of events

Three Ways to Lead

Go online to build thought leadership in more ways than just content.

WEBINARS

Host webinars and invite people to learn. Just like that, you have a following.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Distribute press releases and engage in media outreach.

Reporters love a good story idea, and coverage builds your reputation.

REPOST OTHERS' CONTENT

Align with other thought leaders.

Get permission to repurpose their content on your own channels, and post short clips when someone speaks at your event.



Lead From the Front

Practical ways to put your expertise on display.

- 1 Host a free TEDx-style learning event for the community.
- 2 Position members as experts — invite them to speak.
- 3 Run a Chamber CEO breakfast or a “State of the City” with local leaders.
- 4 Offer lunch-and-learns and seminars; bring in specialists such as Shari Pash for membership and volunteer growth.
- 5 Publish advocacy and economic content — the U.S. Chamber's Small Business Index is a model.



Ideas: 40 Member Engagement & 50 Non-Dues Ideas (chamber-pros-community.com); sharipash.com; uschamber.com.

TACTIC 5

Capture Attention With Inbound Marketing

Stop interrupting. Become the magnet that draws people to you.



From Interruption to Attraction

In the old days, marketing was all about outbound, interruptive campaigns. The internet changed that.

The old way

Outbound, interruptive campaigns pulled people away from what they were already doing — and asked for attention they hadn't offered.

The new way

We connect with people when they're already thinking about the products and services we provide. We offer great content — the magnet that draws interested people to us.



Capture the Moment of Engagement

It isn't enough to engage people — you must also capture them.

VISIBLE CALLS TO ACTION

Put a clear, simple call to action on multiple pages, so people never have to hunt for the next step.

LEAD MAGNETS

Offer content compelling enough that people will fill out a form — giving you their name and contact information so you can connect later.

OPT-IN COMMUNICATIONS

Make it easy to opt in. Relevant content turns a one-time chat into an ongoing conversation — the secret to turning prospects into members.



Build the Inbound Habit

Make it easy for the right people to find you and raise their hand.

- 1 Let members opt in to SMS/text alerts and push notifications.
- 2 Offer a member discount card and track how it's used.
- 3 Give new members a formal, fun onboarding — a 30/90-day journey that engages them early.
- 4 Claim your listings so discovery tools like the U.S. Chamber's Local Chamber Finder point to you.
- 5 Use lead magnets — the very guides behind this session are examples you can borrow.



Ideas: 40 Member Engagement Ideas (chamber-pros-community.com); structured onboarding — GrowthZone 2026 Survey; uschamber.com.

Inbound Fuels Retention

Engagement isn't a campaign — it's a plan you follow through on.

Set expectations from day one, and follow through on what you promise.

Asking for opinions is part of today's crowdsourced-leadership trend — but it backfires if you don't use, or at least acknowledge, the suggestions. Don't ask for an opinion you don't want.

Above all, write the plan. As membership strategist Shari Pash puts it, don't operate without a recruitment, engagement, and retention plan.



Sources: 7 Keys to Member Retention (chamber-pros-community.com); sharipash.com; GrowthZone 2026 Survey.

23%

of chambers have a written plan for increasing member engagement — be one of them

Five Game-Changing Tactics

How many of these are you using to engage your membership? Today's a great day to start.

1 Build awareness through social media

4 Build a following through thought leadership

2 Build trust through content marketing

5 Capture prospects' attention with inbound marketing

3 Use storytelling to drive digital engagement



Where to Start

Engagement drives retention — and retention drives revenue.

Don't try all five at once.

Pick one or two tactics, and build a simple plan around them. A proven path: Discovery → Strategy → Implementation → Outcomes.

There's real upside waiting: 85% of chambers have no formal initiative to win back lapsed members — a straightforward place to find quick wins.



Sources: Shari Pash proven process (sharipash.com); GrowthZone 2026 Chamber Survey.

THIS WEEK

Three steps to momentum:

- 1 Choose one tactic to run for 90 days.
- 2 Write a one-page plan with an owner and a metric.
- 3 Delight one member for no reason at all.

Discussion



You Deserve a Partner

GrowthZone's mission is to empower chambers and associations with the tools to grow member value, keep members engaged, and do more in less time.

GrowthZone AMS (Association Management Software) and ChamberMaster/MemberZone are full membership management platforms with built-in payment processing, e-commerce fundraising, marketing automation, and more, designed to manage the day-to-day operations of your organization.

GROW · ENGAGE · RETAIN

Everything in this session — social, content, storytelling, thought leadership, and inbound — is easier with the right platform behind it.



Thank You!



References & Resources

Everything in this deck traces to the sources below.

GUIDES & DATA

Provided files:

GrowthZone — 2026 Annual Chamber Survey Results

GrowthZone — How to Keep Members Engaged (guide)

Chamber Pros Community— 40 Member Engagement Ideas

Chamber Pros Community— 50 Non-Dues Revenue Ideas for Chamber Pros

Chamber Pros Community— 7 Keys to Member Retention

WEBSITES

Reference sites:

Shari Pash — sharipash.com

Chamber Pros Community — chamber-pros-community.com

Erik Qualman, Socialnomics — equalman.com

U.S. Chamber of Commerce — uschamber.com